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THE DALTONS

OR

THREE ROADS IN LIFE

BY

CHARLES LEVER

in Two Volumes.

ILLUSTRATED BY PHIZ.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL.

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THE DALTONS

OR

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

BY

CHARLES LEVER

AUTHOR OF THE "KNIGHT OF GWYNNE," "ROLAND CASHEL," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1852.

250. a. 219.

TO LORD METHUEN.

My dear Methuen,

Some idle folk have pretended that certain living characters have been depicted under the fictitious names of these volumes. There is, I assure you, but one personality contained in it,—and that is of a right true-hearted Englishman, hospitable, and manly in all his dealings, and to him I wish to dedicate my book, in testimony, not only of the gratitude which, in common with all his countrymen here, I feel to be his due, but in recognition of many happy hours passed in his society, and the honour of his friendship. The personality begins and ends with this dedication, which I beg you to accept of, and am

Ever yours, faithfully,

CHARLES LEVER.

Palazzo Capponi, Florence,
Feb. 28, 1852.

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THE DALTONS;

OR,

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

BADEN OUT OF SEASON.

A THEATRE by daylight—a great historical picture in the process of cleaning—a ballet-dancer of a wet-day hastening to rehearsal—the favourite for the Oaks dead-lame in a straw-yard—are scarcely more stripped of their legitimate illusions than is a fashionable watering-place on the approach of winter. The gay shops and stalls of flaunting wares, are closed; the promenades, lately kept in trimmest order, are weed-grown and neglected; the "sear and yellow leaves" are fluttering and rustling along the alleys where "Beauty's step was wont to tread." Both music and fountains have ceased to play; the very statues are putting on great overcoats of snow, while the orange-trees file off like a sad funeral procession to hide themselves in dusky sheds till the coming spring.

You see as you look around you that nature has been as unreal as art itself; and that all the bright hues of foliage and flower—all the odours that floated from bed and parterre—all the rippling flow of stream and fountain, have been just as artistically devised, and as much "got up," as the transparencies, or the Tyrolese singers, the fireworks, or the fancy fair, or any other of those ingenious "spectacles" which amuse the grown children of fashion. The few who yet linger seem to have undergone a strange transmutation. The smiling landlord of the "Adler"—

we refer particularly to Germany as the very land of watering-places—is a half-sulky, farmer-looking personage, busily engaged in storing up his Indian corn, and his firewood and his forage, against the season of snows. The bland "Croupier," on whose impassive countenance no shade of fortune was able to mark even a passing emotion, is now seen higgling with a peasant for a sack of charcoal, in all the eagerness of avarice. The trim maiden, whose golden locks and soft blue eyes made the bouquets she sold seem fairer to look on, is a stout wench, whose uncouth fur cap and wooden shoes are the very antidotes to romance. All the transformations take the same sad colours. It is a pantomime read backwards.

Such was Baden-Baden in the November of 182—. Some weeks of bad and broken weather had scattered and dispersed all the gay company. The hotels and assembly-rooms were closed for the winter. The ball-room, which so lately was alight with a thousand tapers, was now barricaded like a gaol. The very post-office, around which each morning an eager and pressing crowd used to gather, was shut up—one small aperture alone remaining as if to show to what a fraction all correspondence had been reduced. The Hôtel de Russie was the only house open in the little town; but although the door lay ajar, no busy throng of waiters, no lamps, invited the traveller to believe a hospitable reception might await him within. A very brief glance inside would soon have dispelled any such illusion had it ever existed. The wide staircase, formerly lined with orange-trees and camellias, was stripped of all its bright foliage; the marble statues were removed; the great thermometer, whose crystal decorations had arrested many a passing look, was now encased within a wooden box, as if its tell-tale face might reveal unpleasant truths, if left exposed.

The spacious "Saal," where some eighty guests assembled every day, was denuded of all its furniture, mirrors and lustres; bronzes and pictures were gone, and nothing remained but a huge earthenware stove, within whose grating a faded nosegay—left there in summer—defied all speculations as to a fire.

In this comfortless chamber three persons now paraded with that quick step and brisk motion that bespeak a walk for warmth and exercise; for dismal as it was within doors, it was still preferable to the scene without, where a cold incessant rain was falling, that, on the hills around, took the form of snow. The last lingerers at a watering-place, like those who cling on to a wreck, have usually something peculiarly sad in their aspect. Unable, as it were, to brave the waves like strong swimmers, they hold on to the last with some vague hope of escape, and like a shipwrecked crew, drawing closer to each other in adversity than in more prosperous times,

they condescend now to acquaintance and even intimacy, where, before, a mere nod of recognition was alone interchanged. Such were the three who now, buttoned up to the chin, and with hands deeply thrust into side pockets, paced backwards and forwards, sometimes exchanging a few words, but in that broken and discursive fashion that showed that no tie of mutual taste or companionship had bound them together.

The youngest of the party was a small and very slightly made man of about five or six-and-twenty, whose face, voice, and figure were almost feminine, and, only for a very slight line of black moustache, might have warranted the suspicion of a disguise. His lacquered boots and spotless yellow gloves appeared somewhat out of season, as well as the very light textured coat which he wore; but Mr. Albert Jekyl had been accidentally detained at Baden, waiting for that cruel remittance which—whether the sin be that of agent or relative—is ever so slow of coming. That he bore the inconvenience admirably (and without the slightest show of impatience) it is but fair to confess, and whatever chagrin, either the detention, the bad weather, or the solitude may have occasioned, no vestige of discontent appeared upon features where a look of practised courtesy, and a most bland smile, gave the predominant expression. "Who he was," or, in other words, whence he came—of what family—with what fortune, pursuits, or expectations, we are not ashamed to confess our utter ignorance, seeing that it was shared by all those that tarried that season at Baden, with whom, however, he lived on terms of easy and familiar intercourse.

The next to him was a bilious looking man, somewhat past the middle of life, with that hard and severe cast of features that rather repels than invites intimacy. In figure he was compactly and stoutly built, his step as he walked and his air as he stood showed one whose military training had given the whole tone to his character. Certain strong lines about the mouth, and a peculiar puckering of the angles of the eyes, boded a turn for sarcasm, which all his instincts, and they were Scotch ones, could not completely repress. His voice was loud, sharp, and ringing; the voice of a man who, when he said a thing, would not brook being asked to repeat it. That Colonel Haggerstone knew how to be sapling as well as oak, was a tradition among those who had served with him; still it is right to add, that his more congenial mood was the imperative, and that which he usually practised. The accidental lameness of one of his horses had detained him some weeks at Baden, a durance which assuredly appeared to push his temper to its very last entrenchments.

The third representative of forlorn humanity was a very tall, muscular man, whose jockey-cut green coat and wide-brimmed hat, contrasted

oddly with a pair of huge white moustaches, that would have done credit to a captain of the old guard. On features, originally handsome, time, poverty, and dissipation, had left many a mark; but still the half droll, half truculent twinkle of his clear grey eyes, showed him one whom no turn of fortune could thoroughly subdue, and who, even in the very hardest of his trials, could find heart to indulge his humour—for Peter Dalton was an Irishman; and although many years an absentee, held the dear island and its prejudices as green in his memory as though he had left it but a week before.

Such were the three—who, without one sympathy in common, without a point of contact in character—were now drawn into a chance acquaintance by the mere accident of bad weather. Their conversation—if such it could be called—showed how little progress could be made in intimacy by those whose roads in life lie apart. The by-gone season, the company, the play-table and its adventures, were all discussed so often, that nothing remained but the weather. That topic, so inexhaustible to Englishmen, however, offered little variety now, for it had been uniformly bad for some weeks past.

"Where do you purpose to pass the winter, Sir?" said Haggerstone to Jekyl, after a somewhat lengthy lamentation over the probable condition of all the Alpine passes.

"I've scarcely thought of it yet," simpered out the other, with his habitual smile. "There's no saying where one ought to pitch his tent 'till the Carnival opens."

"And you, Sir?" asked Haggerstone of his companion on the other side.

"Upon my honour, I don't know then," said Dalton; "but I wouldn't wonder if I stayed here or hereabouts."

"Here!—why, this is Tobolsk, Sir!—you surely couldn't mean to pass a winter here?"

"I once knew a man who did it," interposed Jekyl, blandly. "They cleaned him out at 'the tables;' and so he had nothing for it but to remain. He made rather a good thing of it, too; for it seems these worthy people, however conversant with the great arts of ruin, had never seen the royal game of thimble-rig; and Frank Mathews walked into them all, and contrived to keep himself in beet-root and boiled beef by his little talents."

"Wasn't that the fellow who was broke at Kilmagund?" croaked Haggerstone.

"Something happened to him in India; I never well knew what," simpered Jekyl. "Some said he had caught the cholera; others, that he had got into the Company's service."

By way of a mishap, Sir, I suppose," said the Colonel, tartly.

"He wouldn't have minded it, in the least. For certain," resumed the other coolly, "he was a sharp-witted fellow; always ready to take the tone of any society."

The Colonel's cheek grew yellower, and his eyes sparkled with an angrier lustre; but he made no rejoinder.

"That's the place to make a fortune, I'm told," said Dalton. "I hear there's not the like of it all the world over."

"Or to spend one," added Haggerstone, curtly.

"Well, and why not?" replied Dalton. "I'm sure it's as pleasant as saving—barring a man's a Scotchman."

"And if he should be, Sir?—and if he were one that now stands before you?" said Haggerstone, drawing himself proudly up, and looking the other sternly in the face.

"No offence—no offence in life. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Sure, a man can't help where he's going to be born."

"I fancy we'd all have booked ourselves for a cradle in Buckingham Palace," interposed Jekyl, "if the matter were optional."

"Faith! I don't think so," broke in Dalton. "Give me back Corrig-O'Neal, as my Grandfather Pearce had it, with the whole Barony of Kilmurray-O'Mahon, two packs of hounds, and the first cellar in the county, and to the devil I'd fling all the royal residences ever I seen."

"The sentiment is scarcely a loyal one, Sir," said Haggerstone, "and as one wearing his Majesty's cloth, I beg to take the liberty of reminding you of it."

"Maybe it isn't;—and what then?" said Dalton, over whose good-natured countenance a passing cloud of displeasure lowered.

"Simply, Sir, that it shouldn't be uttered in *my* presence," said Haggerstone.

"Phew!" said Dalton, with a long whistle. "Is that what you're at? See, now—" Here he turned fully round, so as to face the Colonel—"see, now; I'm the dullest fellow in the world at what is called 'taking a thing up;' but make it clear for me—let me only see what is pleasing to the company, and it isn't Peter Dalton will baulk your fancy."

"May I venture to remark," said Jekyl, blandly, "that you are both in error, and however I may (the cold of the season being considered) envy your warmth, it is after all only so much caloric needlessly expended."

"I wasn't choleric at all," broke in Dalton, mistaking the word, and

thus happily, by the hearty laugh his blunder created, bringing the silly altercation to an end.

"Well," said Haggerstone, "since we are all so perfectly agreed in our sentiments, we couldn't do better than dine together, and have a bumper to the King's health.

"I always dine at two, or half past," simpered Jekyl: "besides, I'm on a regimen, and never drink wine."

"There's nobody likes a bit of conviviality better than myself," said Dalton; "but I've a kind of engagement—a promise I made this morning."

There was an evident confusion in the way these words were uttered, which did not escape either of the others, who exchanged the most significant glances as he spoke.

"What have we here?" cried Jekyl, as he sprang to the window and looked out. "A courier by all that's muddy? Who could have expected such an apparition at this time?"

"What can bring people here now?" said Haggerstone, as with his glass to his eye he surveyed the little well-fed figure, who, in his tawdry jacket all slashed with gold, and heavy jack-boots, was closely locked in the embraces of the landlord.

Jekyl at once issued forth to learn the news, and, although not fully three minutes absent, returned to his companions with a full account of the expected arrivals.

"It's that rich banker, Sir Stafford Onslow, with his family. They were on their way to Italy, and made a mess of it somehow in the Black Forest—they got swept away by a torrent, or crushed by an avalanche, or something of the kind, and Sir Stafford was seized with the gout, and so they've put back, glad even to make such a port as Baden."

"If it's the gout's the matter with him," said Dalton, "I've the finest receipt in the world. Take a pint of spirits—poteen if you can get it—beat up two eggs and a pat of butter in it; throw in a clove of garlic and a few scrapings of horse-radish, let it simmer over the fire for a minute or two, stir it with a sprig of rosemary to give it a flavour, and then drink it off."

"Gracious Heaven! what a dose!" exclaimed Jekyl, in horror.

"Well, then, I never knew it fail. My father took it for forty years, and there wasn't a haler man in the country. If it wasn't that he gave up the horse-radish, for he didn't like the taste of it, he'd, maybe, be alive at this hour."

"The cure was rather slow of operation," said Haggerstone, with a sneer.

"'Twas only the more like all remedies for Irish grievances, then," observed Dalton, and his face grew a shade graver as he spoke.

"Who was it this Onslow married?" said the Colonel, turning to Jekyl.

"One of the Headworths, I think,"

"Ah, to be sure; Lady Hester. She was a handsome woman when I saw her first, but she fell off sadly, and indeed, if she had not, she'd scarcely have condescended to an alliance with a man in trade, even though he were Sir Gilbert Stafford."

"Sir Gilbert Stafford!" repeated Dalton.

"Yes, sir; and now Sir Gifford Stafford Onslow. He took the name from that estate in Warwickshire. Skepton Park, I believe they call it."

"By my conscience, I wish that was the only thing he took," ejaculated Dalton, with a degree of fervour that astonished the others, "for he took an elegant estate that belonged by right to my wife. Maybe you have heard tell of Corrig-O'Neal?"

Haggerstone shook his head, while with his elbow he nudged his companion, to intimate his total disbelief in the whole narrative.

"Surely you must have heard of the murder of Arthur Godfrey, of Corrig-O'Neal; wasn't the whole world ringing with it?"

Another negative sign answered this appeal.

"Well, well, that beats all ever I heard! but so it is, sorrow bit they care in England if we all murdered each other! Arthur Godfrey, as I was saying, was my wife's brother—there were just the two of them, Arthur and Jane—she was my wife."

"Ah! here they come!" exclaimed Jekyl, not sorry for the event which so opportunely interrupted Dalton's unpromising history. And now a heavy travelling carriage, loaded with imperials and beset with boxes, was dragged up to the door by six smoking horses. The courier and the landlord were immediately in attendance, and after a brief delay the steps were lowered, and a short, stout man, with a very red face, and a very yellow wig, descended, and assisted a lady to alight. She was a tall woman, whose figure and carriage were characterized by an air of fashion. After her came a younger lady, and lastly—moving with great difficulty, and showing by his worn looks and enfeebled frame the suffering he had endured—came a very thin, mild-looking man of about sixty. Leaning upon the arm of the courier at one side, and of his stout companion, whom he called Doctor, at the other, he slowly followed the ladies into the house. They had scarcely disappeared, when a calèche, drawn by three horses at a sharp gallop, drew up, and a young fellow sprang

out, whose easy gestures and active movements showed that all the enjoyments of wealth, and all the blandishments of fashion, had not undermined the elastic vigour of body which young Englishmen owe to the practice of field sports.

"This place quite deserted, I suppose," cried he, addressing the landlord. "No one here?"

"No one, Sir. All gone," was the reply.

Haggerstone's head shook with a movement of impatience as he heard this remark, disparaging, as it was, to his own importance; but he said nothing, and resumed his walk as before.

"Our Irish friend is gone away, I perceive," said Jekyl, as he looked around in vain for Dalton. "Do you believe all that story of the estate he told us?"

"Not a syllable of it, Sir. I never yet met an Irishman—and it has been my lot to know some scores of them—who had not been cheated out of a magnificent property, and was not related to half the Peerage to boot. Now, I take it, that our highly-connected friend is rather out at elbows!" And he laughed his own peculiar hard laugh, as though the mere fancy of another man's poverty was something inconceivably pleasant and amusing.

"Dinner, Sir," said the waiter, entering, and addressing the Colonel.

"Glad of it," cried he; "it's the only way to kill time in this cursed place;" and so saying, and without the ceremony of a good-bye to his companion, the Colonel bustled out of the room with a step intended to represent extreme youth and activity. "That gentleman dines at two?" asked he of the waiter, as he followed him up the stairs.

"He has not dined at all, Sir, for some days back," said the waiter. "A cup of coffee in the morning and a biscuit are all that he takes."

The Colonel made an expressive gesture by turning out the lining of his pocket.

"Yes, Sir," replied the other, significantly; "very much that way, I believe." And with that he uncovered the soup, and the Colonel arranged his napkin and prepared to dine.

CHAPTER II.

AN HUMBLE INTERIOR.

When Dalton parted from his companions at the "Russie," it was to proceed by many an intricate and narrow passage to a remote part of the upper town, where close to the garden wall of the Ducal palace stood, and still stands, a little solitary two-storied house, framed in wood, and the partitions displaying some very faded traces of fresco painting. Here was the well-known shop of a toy-maker; and although now closely barred and shuttered, in summer many a gay and merry troop of children devoured with eager eyes the treasures of Hans Roëckle.

Entering a dark and narrow passage beside the shop, Dalton ascended the little creaking stairs which led to the second story. The landing-place was covered with fire-wood, great branches of newly-hewn beech and oak, in the midst of which stood a youth, hatchet in hand, busily engaged in chopping and splitting the heavy masses around him. The flush of exercise upon his cheek suited well the character of a figure which, clothed only in shirt and trousers, presented a perfect picture of youthful strength and symmetry.

"Tired, Frank?" asked the old man, as he came up.

"Tired, father! not a bit of it. I only wish I had as much more to split for you, since the winter will be a cold one."

"Come in and sit down, boy, now," said the father, with a slight tremor as he spoke. "We cannot have many more opportunities of talking together. To-morrow is the twenty-eighth of November."

"Yes; and I must be in Vienna by the fourth, so uncle Stephen writes."

"You must not call him uncle, Frank, he forbids it himself; besides, he is my uncle, and not yours. My father and he were brothers, but never saw each other after fifteen years of age, when the Count—that's what we always called him—entered the Austrian service, so that we are all strangers to each other."

"His letter doesn't show any lively desire for a closer intimacy," said the boy, laughing. "A droll composition it is, spelling, and all."

"He left Ireland when he was a child, and lucky he was to do so," sighed Dalton, heavily; "I wish I had done the same."

The chamber into which they entered was, although scrupulously clean and neat, marked by every sign of poverty. The furniture was scanty

and of the humblest kind. The table linen such as used by the peasantry, while the great jug of water that stood on the board seemed the very climax of narrow fortune in a land where the very poorest are wine drinkers.

A small knapsack with a light travelling cap on it, and a staff beside it, seemed to attract Dalton's eyes as he sat down. "It is but a poor equipment, that yonder, Frank," said he at last, with a forced smile.

"The easier carried," replied the lad, gaily.

"Very true," sighed the other. "You must make the journey on foot."

"And why not, father? Of what use all this good blood, of which I have been told so often and so much, if it will not enable a man to compete with the low-born peasant. And see how well this knapsack sits," cried he, as he threw it on his shoulder. "I doubt if the Emperor's pack will be as pleasant to carry."

"So long as you haven't to carry a heavy heart, boy," said Dalton, with deep emotion, "I believe no load is too much!"

"If it were not for leaving you and the girls, I never could be happier, never more full of hope, father. Why should not *I* win my way upward as Count Stephen has done? Loyalty and courage are not the birthright of only one of our name!"

"Bad luck was all the birthright ever I inherited," said the old man, passionately; "bad luck in everything I touched through life! Where others grew rich, I became a beggar; where *they* found happiness, *I* met misery and ruin! But it's not of this I ought to be thinking now," cried he, changing his tone. "Let us see, where are the girls?" And so saying, he entered a little kitchen which adjoined the room, and where, engaged in the task of preparing the dinner, was a girl, who, though several years older, bore a striking resemblance to the boy. Over features that must once have been the very type of buoyant gaiety, years of sorrow and suffering had left their deep traces, and the dark circles around the eyes betrayed how deeply she had known affliction. Ellen Dalton's figure was faulty for want of height in proportion to her size, but had another and more grievous defect in a lameness, which made her walk with the greatest difficulty. This was the consequence of an accident when riding, a horse having fallen upon her and fractured the hip-bone. It was said, too, that she had been engaged to be married at the time, but that her lover, shocked by the disfigurement, had broken off the match, and thus made this calamity the sorrow of a life long.

"Where's Kate?" said the father, as he cast a glance around the chamber.

Ellen drew near, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"Not in this dreadful weather; surely, Ellen, you didn't let her go out in such a night as this."

"Hush!" murmured she, "Frank will hear you; and remember, father, it is his last night with us."

"Couldn't old Andy have found the place?" asked Dalton; and, as he spoke, he turned his eyes to a corner of the kitchen, where a little old man sat in a straw chair peeling turnips, while he croned a ditty to himself in a low sing-song tone; his thin wizened features, browned by years and smoke, his small scratch wig, and the remains of an old scarlet hunting-coat that he wore, giving him the strongest resemblance to one of the monkeys one sees in a street exhibition.

"Poor Andy!" cried Ellen, "he'd have lost his way twenty times before he got to the bridge."

"Faith then he must be greatly altered," said Dalton, "for I've seen him track a fox for twenty miles of ground, when not a dog of the pack could come on the trace. Eh, Andy!" cried he, aloud, and stooping down so as to be heard by the old man, "do you remember the cover at Corralin?"

"Don't ask him, father," said Ellen, eagerly; "he cannot sleep for the whole night after his old memories have been awakened."

The spell, however, had begun to work; and the old man, letting fall both knife and turnip, placed his hands on his knees, and in a weak reedy treble began a strange monotonous kind of air, as if to remind himself of the words, which, after a minute or two, he remembered thus:

"There was old Tom Whaley,
And Anthony Baillie,
And Fitzgerald, the Knight of Glynn,
And Father Clare,
On his big brown mare,
That mornin' at Corralin!"

"Well done, Andy! well done!" exclaimed Dalton. "You're as fresh as a four-year-old."

"Iss!" said Andy, and went on with his song.

"And Miles O'Shea,
On his cropped tail' bay,
Was soon seen ridin' in.
He was vexed and crossed
At the light hoar frost,
That mornin' at Corralin."

"Go on, Andy! go on, my boy!" exclaimed Dalton, in a rapture at the words that reminded him of many a day in the field and many a night's hard carouse. "What comes next?"

"Ay!" cried Andy.

"Says he, 'when the wind
Laves no scent behind,
To keep the dogs out's a sin;
I'll be d—d if I stay,
To lose my day,
This mornin' at Corralin.'

But ye see he was out in his recknin'!" cried Andy; "for, as if

To give him the lie
There rose a cry
As the hounds came yelpin' in,
And from every throat
There swelled one note,
That mornin' at Corralin."

A fit of coughing, brought on by a vigorous attempt to imitate the cry of a pack, here closed Andy's minstrelsy; and Ellen, who seemed to have anticipated some such catastrophe, now induced her father to return to the sitting-room, while she proceeded to use those principles of domestic medicine—clapping on the back and cold water—usually deemed of efficacy in like cases.

"There now, no more singing, but take up your knife and do what I bade you," said she, affecting an air of rebuke; while the old man, whose perceptions did not rise above those of a spaniel, hung down his head in silence. At the same moment the outer door of the kitchen opened, and Kate Dalton entered. Taller and several years younger than her sister, she was in the full pride of that beauty of which blue eyes and dark hair are the chief characteristics, and is deemed by many as peculiarly Irish. Delicately fair, and with features regular as a Grecian model, there was a look of brilliant, almost of haughty, defiance about her, to which her gait and carriage seemed to contribute; nor could the humble character of her dress, where strictest poverty declared itself, disguise the sentiment.

"How soon you're back, dearest," said Ellen, as she took off the dripping cloak from her sister's shoulders.

"And only think, Ellen, I was obliged to go to Lichtenthal, where little Hans spends all his evenings in the winter season, at the 'Hahn!' And just fancy his gallantry! He would see me home, and would hold up the umbrella, too, over my head, although it kept his own arm at full stretch; while, by the pace we walked, I did as much for his legs. It is very ungrateful to laugh at him, for he said a hundred pretty things to me,—about my courage to venture out in such weather,—about my accent as I spoke German,—and lastly, in praise of my skill as a

sculptor. Only fancy, Ellen, what a humiliation for me to confess that all these pretty devices were yours, and not mine; and that my craft went no further than seeking for the material which your genius was to fashion."

"Genius, Kate!" exclaimed Ellen, laughing. "Has Master Hans been giving you a lesson in flattery; but tell me of your success—which has he taken?"

"All—everything!" cried Kate; "for although at the beginning the little fellow would select one figure and then change it for another, it was easy to see that he could not bring himself to part with any of them; now, sitting down in rapture before the 'Travelling Student,'—now, gazing delightedly at the 'Charcoal-Burners,'—but all his warmest enthusiasm bursting forth as I produced the 'Forest Maiden at the Well.' He did, indeed, think the 'Pedlar' too handsome, but he found no such fault with the Maiden: and here, dearest—here are the proceeds, for I told him that we must have ducats in shining gold for Frank's new crimson purse; and here they are;" and she held up a purse of gay colours, through whose meshes the bright metal glittered.

"Poor Hans!" said Ellen, feelingly. "It is seldom that so humble an artist meets so generous a patron."

"He's coming to-night," said Kate, as she smoothed down the braids of her glossy hair before a little glass, "he's coming to say good-bye to Frank. He is so fond of Frank."

"And of Frank's sister Nelly; nay, no blushing, dearest; for myself, I am free to own admiration never comes amiss even when offered by as humble a creature as the Dwarf, Hans Roëckle."

"For shame, Kate, for shame. It is this idle vanity that stifles honest pride, as rank weeds destroy the soil for wholesome plants to live in."

"It is very well for you, Nelly, to talk of pride, but poor things like myself are fain to content themselves with the baser metal, and even put up with vanity! There, now, no sermons, no seriousness; I'll listen to nothing to-day that savours of sadness, and, as I hear Pa and Frank laughing, I'll be of the party."

The glance of affection and admiration which Ellen bestowed upon her sister, was not unmixed with an expression of painful anxiety; and the sigh that escaped her told with what tender interest she watched over her.

The little dinner, prepared with more than usual care, at length appeared, and the family sat around the humble board with a sense of happiness dashed by one only reflection—that on the morrow Frank's place would be vacant.

Still each exerted himself to overcome the sadness of that thought, or even to dally with it, as one suggestive of pleasure; and when Ellen

placed unexpectedly a great flask of Margräer before them to drink the young soldier's health, the zest and merriment rose to the highest. Nor was old Andy forgotten in the general joy. A large bumper of wine was put before him, and the door of the sitting-room left open, as if to let him participate in the merry noises that prevailed there. How naturally, and instinctively, too, their hopes gave colour to all they said, as they told each other that the occasion was a happy one! that dear Frank would soon be an officer, and of course distinguished by the favour of some one high in power; and lastly they dwelt with such complacency on the affectionate regard and influence of "Count Stephen" as certain to secure the youth's advancement. They had often heard of the Count's great military fame, and the esteem in which he was held by the Court of Vienna; and now they speculated on the delight it would afford the old warrior—who had never been married himself—to have one like Frank, to assist by his patronage, and promote by his influence, and with such enthusiasm did they discuss the point, that at last they actually persuaded themselves that Frank's entering the service was a species of devotion to his relative's interests, by affording him an object worthy of his regard and affection.

While Ellen loved to dwell upon the great advantages of one who should be like a father to the boy, aiding him by wise counsel, and guiding him in every difficulty, Kate preferred to fancy the Count introducing Frank into all the brilliant society of the splendid capital, presenting him to those whose acquaintance was distinction, and at once launching him into the world of fashion and enjoyment. The promptitude with which he acceded to their father's application on Frank's behalf, was constantly referred to as the evidence of his affectionate feeling for the family; and if his one solitary letter was of the very briefest and driest of all epistolary essays, they accounted for this—very naturally—by the length of time which had elapsed since he had either spoken or written his native language.

In the midst of these self-gratulations and pleasant fancies the door opened, and Hans Roëckle appeared, covered from head to foot by a light hoar frost, that made him look like the figure with which an ingenious confectioner sometimes decorates a cake. The Dwarf stood staring at the signs of a conviviality so new and unexpected.

"Is this Christmas time, or Holy Monday, or the Three Kings' festival, or what it is, that I see you all feasting?" cried Hans, shaking the snow off his hat, and proceeding to remove a cloak which he had draped over his shoulder in most artistic folds.

"We were drinking Frank's health, Master Hans," said Dalton, "before he leaves us. Come over and pledge him too, and wish him

Hans Onwaghs against the Horrors of War

all success, and that he may live to be a good and valued soldier of the Emperor."

Hans had by this time taken off his cloak, which, by mounting on a chair, he contrived to hang up, and now approached the table with great solemnity, a pair of immense boots of Russian leather, that reached to his hips, giving him a peculiarly cumbrous and heavy gait; but these, as well as a long vest of rabbit skins that buttoned close to the neck, made his invariable costume in the winter.

"I drink," said the Dwarf, as, filling a bumper, he turned to each of the company severally; "I drink to the venerable father and the fair maidens, and the promising youth of this good family, and I wish them every blessing good Christians ought to ask for; but as for killing and slaying, for burning villages and laying waste cities, I've no sympathy with these."

"But you are speaking of barbarous times, Master Hans," said Kate, whose cheek mantled into scarlet as she spoke, "when to be strong was to be cruel, and when ill-disciplined hordes tyrannised over good citizens."

"I am talking of soldiers, such as the world has ever seen them," cried Hans, passionately; but of whose military experiences, it is but fair to say, his own little toy-shop supplied all the source. "What are they?" cried he, "but toys that never last, whether he who plays with them be Child or Kaiser! always getting smashed, heads knocked off here, arms and legs astray there; ay, and strangest of all, thought most off when most disabled! and then at last packed up in a box or a barrack, it matters not which, to be forgotten and seen no more! Hadst thou thought of something useful, boy—some good craft, a Jäger with a corkscrew inside of him, a tailor that turns into a pair of snuffers, a Dutch lady that makes a pincushion—these are toys people don't weary of—but a soldier! to stand ever thus"—and Hans shouldered the fire-shovel, and stood "at the present." "To wheel about so—walk ten steps here—ten back there—never so much as a glance at the pretty girl who is passing close beside you." Here he gave a look of such indescribable tenderness toward Kate, that the whole party burst into a fit of laughter. "They would have drawn me for the conscription," said Hans, proudly, "but I was the only son of a widow, and they could not."

"And are you never grieved to think what glorious opportunities of distinction have been thus lost to you?" said Kate, who, notwithstanding Ellen's imploring looks, could not resist the temptation of amusing herself with the Dwarf's vanity.

"I have never suffered that thought to weigh upon me," cried Hans,

with the most unsuspecting simplicity. "It is true, I might have risen to rank and honours; but how would they have suited *me*, or I *them*? Or how should I have made those dearest to me sharers in a fortune so unbecoming to us all? Think of poor Hans' old mother, if her son were to ask her blessing with a coat all glittering with stars and crosses; and then think of her as I have seen her, when I go, as I do every year, to visit her in the Bregentzer Wald, when she comes out to meet me with our whole village, proud of her son, and yet not ashamed of herself. That is glory—that is distinction enough for Hans Roëckle."

The earnestness of his voice, and the honest manliness of his sentiments, were more than enough to cover the venial errors of a vanity that was all simplicity. It is true that Hans saw the world only through the medium of his own calling, and that not a very exalted one; but still there went through all the narrownesses of his views a tone of kindliness—a hearty spirit of benevolence, that made his simplicity at times rise into something almost akin to wisdom. He had known the Daltons as his tenants, and soon perceived that they were not like those rich English, from whom his countrymen derive such abundant gains. He saw them arrive at a season when all others were taking their departure, and detected in all their efforts at economy, not alone that they were poor, but, sadder still, that they were of those who seem never to accustom themselves to the privations of narrow fortune; for, while some submit in patience to their humble lot, with others, life is one long and hard-fought struggle, wherein health, hope, and temper, are expended in vain. That the Daltons maintained a distance and reserve towards others of like fortune did, indeed, puzzle honest Hans—perhaps it displeased him, too—for he thought it might be pride; but then their treatment of himself disarmed that suspicion, for they not only received him ever cordially, but with every sign of real affection, and what was he to expect such? Nor were these the only traits that fascinated him; for all the rugged shell, the kernel was a heart as tender, as warm, and as full of generous emotions, as ever beat within an ampler breast. The two sisters, in Hans' eyes, were alike beautiful; each had some grace or charm that he had never met with before, nor could he ever satisfy himself whether his fancy was more taken by Kate's wit, or by Ellen's gentleness.

If anything were needed to complete the measure of his admiration, their skill in carving those wooden figures, which he sold, would have been sufficient. These were in his eyes—nor was he a mean connoisseur—high efforts of genius; and Hans saw in them a poetry and a truthfulness to nature that such productions rarely, if ever, possess. To sell such things as mere toys, he regarded as little short of a sacrilege, while even to part with them at all, cost him a pang like that the gold-worker of

Florence experienced, when he saw some treasure of Benvenuto's chisel leave his possession. Not, indeed, that honest Hans had to struggle against that criminal passion which prompted the jeweller, even by deeds of assassination, to repossess himself of the coveted objects; nay, on the contrary, he felt a kindness and a degree of interest towards those in whose keeping they were, as if some secret sympathy united them to each other.

Is it any wonder if poor Hans forgot himself in such pleasant company, and sat a full hour and a half longer than he ought? To him the little intervals of silence that were occasionally suffered to intervene, were but moments of dreamy and delicious reverie, wherein his fancy wandered away in a thousand pleasant paths; and when at last the watchman —for remember, good reader, they were in that primitive Germany where customs change not, too abruptly—announced two o'clock, little Hans did not vouchsafe a grateful response to the quaint old rhyme that was chanted beneath the window.

"That little chap would sit to the day of judgment, and never ask to wet his lips," said Dalton, as Frank accompanied the Dwarf down stairs to the street door.

"I believe he not only forgot the hour, but where he was, and everything else," said Kate.

"And poor Frank! who should have been in bed some hours ago," sighed Nelly.

"Gone at last, girls," exclaimed Frank, as he entered laughing. "If it hadn't been a gust of wind that caught him at the door, and carried him clean away, our leave-taking might have lasted till morning. Poor fellow! he had so many cautions to give me—such mountains of good counsel; and see, here is a holy medal he made me accept. He told me the 'Swedes' would never harm me so long as I wore it. He still fancies that we are in the Thirty Years' War."

In a hearty laugh over Hans Roëckle's political knowledge, they wished each other an affectionate good-night, and separated. Frank was to have his breakfast by daybreak, and each sister affected to leave the care of that meal to the other, secretly resolving to be up and stirring first.

Save old Andy, there was not one disposed to sleep that night. All were too full of their own cares. Even Dalton himself, blunted as were his feelings by a long life of suffering, his mind was tortured by anxieties; and one sad question arose again and again before him, without an answer ever occurring. "What is to become of the girls when I am gone? Without a home, they will soon be without a protector!" The bright fancies, the hopeful visions in which the evening had been passed, made

the revulsion to these gloomy thoughts the darker. He lay with his hands pressed upon his face, while the hot tears gushed from eyes that never before knew weeping.

At moments he half resolved not to let Frank depart, but an instant's thought showed him how futile would be the change. It would be but leaving him to share the poverty—to depend upon the scanty pittance already too little for themselves. "Would Count Stephen befriend the poor girls?" he asked himself over and over; and in his difficulty he turned to the strange epistle, in which the old general announced Frank's appointment as a cadet.

The paper, the square folding, the straight, stiff letters, well suited a style which plainly proclaimed how many years his English had lain at rest. The note ran thus:—

"Graben-Wien, Octobre 9, 18—.

"WORTHY SIR AND NEPHEW,

"Your kindly greeting, but long-time-on-the-road-coming-letter is in my hands. It is to me pleasure that I announce the appointment of your son as a Cadet in the seventh battalion of the Carl-Franz Infanterie. So with, let him in all speed of time report himself here at Wien, before the War's Minister, bringing his Tauf-schein—Baptism's sign—as proof of Individualism.

"I am yours, well to command, and much loving kinsman,

"GRAF. DALTON VON AUERSBERG,

"Lieut.-General and Feld-Zeug Meister, K.K.A.

"To the high and well-born, the Frei Herr v. Dalton,
in Baden-Baden."

The Farewell Kiss

death, the mysterious circumstances of which were never cleared up, his estate passed to a distant relative, the rich Sir Gilbert Stafford.

Dalton, who long cherished the hope of a reconciliation, saw all prospect vanish when his wife died, which she did, it was said, of a broken heart. His debts were already considerable; and all the resources of borrowing and mortgage had been long since exhausted; nothing was then left for him but an arrangement with his creditors, which, giving him a pittance scarcely above the very closest poverty, enabled him to drag out life in the cheap places of the Continent; and thus, for nigh twenty years, had he wandered about from Dieppe to Ostend, to Bruges, to Dusseldorf, to Coblentz, and so on, among the small Ducal cities, till, with still failing fortune, he was fain to seek a residence for the winter in Baden, where house-rent, at least, would be almost saved to him.

The same apathy that had brought on his ruin enabled him to bear it. Nothing has such a mock resemblance to wisdom, as utter heartlessness; with all the seeming of true philosophy, it assumes a port and bearing above the trials of the world; holds on "the even tenor of its way," undeterred by the reverses which overwhelm others, and even meets the sternest frowns of fortune with the bland smile of equanimity.

In this way Dalton had deceived many who had known him in better days, and who now saw him even in his adversity, with the same careless, good-natured look, as when he took the field with his own hounds, or passed round the claret at his own table. Even his own children were sharers in this delusion, and heard him with wondering admiration, as he told of the life he used to lead, and the style he once kept up at Mount Dalton. These were his favourite topics; and, as he grew older, he seemed to find a kind of consolation in contrasting all the hard rubs of present adversity with his once splendour.

Upon Ellen Dalton, who had known and could still remember her mother, these recitals produced an impression of profound grief, associated as they were with the sufferings of a sick bed and the closing sorrows of a life. While, in the others, they served to keep up a species of pride of birth, and an assumption of superiority to others of like fortune, which their father gloried in, representing, as he used to say, "the old spirit of the Daltons."

As for Kate, she felt it a compensation for present poverty to know that they were of gentle blood, and that if fortune, at some distant future, would deal kindly by them, to think that they should not obtrude themselves like upstarts on the world, but resume, as it were, the place that was long their own.

In Frank the evil had taken a deeper root. Taught from his earliest infancy to believe himself the heir of an ancient house, pride of birth and station instilled into his mind by old Andy the huntsman, the only dependent, who, with characteristic wisdom, they had carried with them from Ireland, he never ceased to ponder on the subject, and wonder within himself if he should ever live to have "his own" again.

Such a hold had this passion taken of him, that, even as a child, he would wander away for days long into lonely and unfrequented spots, thinking over the stories he had heard, and trying to conjure up before his eyes some resemblance to that ancient house and venerable domain which had been so long in his family. It was no part of his teaching to know by what spendthrift and reckless waste, by what a long career of folly, extravagance and dissipation, the fortune of his family had been wrecked; or rather, many vague and shadowy suspicions had been left to fester in his mind of wrongs and injuries done them; of severe laws imposed by English ignorance or cruelty; of injustice, on this hand—heartless indifference of friends on the other; the unrelenting anger of his uncle, Godfrey, filling up the measure of their calamities. Frank Dalton's education went very little further than this; but bad as it was, its effect was blunted by the natural frankness and generosity of his character, its worst fruits being an over-estimate of himself and his pretensions—errors which the world has always the watchful kindness to correct in those who wear threadbare coats and patched boots.

He was warmly and devotedly attached to his father and sisters, and whatever bitterness found its way into his heart was from seeing them enduring the many trials of poverty.

All his enthusiasm for the service in which he was about to enter was, therefore, barely sufficient to overcome the sorrow of parting with those, whom alone of all the world he loved; and when the moment drew nigh for his departure, he forgot the bright illusions by which he had so often fed his hopes, and could only think of the grief of separation.

His candle had burned down, nearly to the socket, when he arose and looked at his watch. It was all dark as midnight, without, although nigh six o'clock. He opened the window, and a thin snow-drift came slanting in, borne on a cutting north wind; he closed it hastily, and shuddered as he thought of the long and lonely march before him. All was silent in the house as he dressed himself and prepared for the road. With noiseless step he drew near his father's door and listened; everything was still. He could not bring himself to disturb him, so he passed on to the room where his sisters slept. The door lay ajar, and a candle was burning on the table. Frank entered on tip-toe and drew

near the bed, but it was empty and had not been lain in. As he turned round he beheld Kate asleep in a chair, dressed as he had last seen her. She had never lain down, and the prayer-book which had dropped from her hand, told how her last waking moments were passed.

He kissed her twice, but even the hot tears that fell from his eyes upon her cheek did not break her slumber. He looked about him for some token to leave, that might tell he had been there, but there was nothing, and, with a low sigh, he stole from the room.

As he passed out into the kitchen Ellen was there. She had already prepared his breakfast, and was spreading the table when he entered.

"How good of you—how kind, Ellen," said he, as he passed his arm around her neck.

"Hush, Frank, they are both sleeping. Poor papa never closed his eyes till half-an-hour ago, and Kate was fairly overcome ere she yielded."

"You will say that I kissed them, Nelly—kissed them twice," said he, in a low, broken voice, "and that I couldn't bear to awake them. Leave-taking is so sorrowful! Oh, Ellen, if I knew that you were all happy—that there were no hardships before you, when I'm away!"

"And why should we not, Frank," said she, firmly. "There is no dishonour in this poverty, so long as there are no straits to make it seem other than it is. Let us rather pray for the spirit that may befit any lot we are thrown in, than for a fortune to which we might be unsuited."

"Would you forget who we are, Ellen?" said he, half reproachfully.

"I would remember it, Frank, in a temper less of pride than humility."

"I do not see much of the family spirit in all this," rejoined he, almost angrily.

"The family spirit," echoed she, feelingly. "What has it ever done for us, save injury? Has it suggested a high-bearing courage against the ills of narrow fortune? Has it told us how to bear poverty with dignity, or taught us one single lesson of patience and submission? Or has it, on the contrary, been ever present to whisper the changes in our condition—how altered our lot—making us ashamed of that companionship which our station rendered possible for us, and leaving us in the isolation of friendlessness for the sake of—I blush to abuse the word—our Pride! Oh, Frank, my dear, dear brother, take it not ill of me, that in our last moments together, perhaps, for years, that I speak what may jar upon your ears to hear; but remember that I am much older—that I have seen far more of the world, at least of its sorrows and cares, than

you have. I have indeed known affliction in many ways, but have never found a poorer comforter in its troubles, than what we call our Pride !"

"You would have me forget I am a Dalton, then?" said the boy, in a tone of sorrowful meaning.

"Never ! when the recollection could prompt a generous or a noble action, a manly ambition, or a high-hearted thought ; but the name will have no spell in it, if used to instil an imperious, discontented spirit—a regretful contrast of what we are, with what we might have been, or what in a worldly sense is more destructive still, a false reliance on the distinction of a family to which we have contributed nothing."

"You do not know, Nelly, dearest, of what a comfort you have robbed me," said Frank, sorrowfully.

"Do not say so, my dearest brother," cried she, passing her arm around him ; "a deception, a mere illusion, is unworthy of that name. Look above the gratification of mere vanity, and you will become steeled against the many wounds self-love is sure to receive in intercourse with the world. I cannot tell how, or with what associates, you are about to live, but I feel certain that in every station a man of truth and honour will make himself respected. Be such, dearest Frank. If family pride—if the name of Dalton have value in your eyes, remember that upon you it rests to assert its right to distinction. If, as I would fondly hope, your heart dwells here with us, bethink ye what joy—what holy gratitude you will diffuse around our humble hearth—to know that our brother is a good man."

It was some moments ere either could speak again. Emotions, very different ones perhaps, filled their hearts, and each was too deeply moved for words. Frank's eyes were full of tears, and his cheek quivering, as he threw his knapsack on his shoulder.

"You will write from Inspruck, Frank ; but how many days will it take ere you reach that city?"

"Twelve or fourteen at least, if I go on foot. There, Nelly, do not help me, dearest ; I shall not have you to-morrow to fasten these straps."

"This is not to be forgotten, Frank : it's Kate's present. How sorry she will be not to have given it with her own hands !" and so saying, she gave him the purse her sister had worked.

"But there is gold in it," said the boy, growing pale with emotion.

"Very little, Frank, dearest," replied she, smiling. "A Cadet must always have gold in his purse, so little Hans tells us ; and you know how wise he is in all these matters."

"And is it from a home like this, that I am to take gold away!" cried he, passionately.

"Nay, Frank, you must not persuade us that we are so very poor. I will not consent to any sense of martyrdom, I promise you." It was not without difficulty she could overcome his scruples; nor, perhaps, had she succeeded at all, if his thoughts had not been diverted into another channel, by a light tapping at the door. It was Hans Roëckle come to awake him.

Again and again the brother and sister embraced; and in a very agony of tears Frank tore himself away, and hastened down the stairs. The next moment the heavy house-door banged loudly, and he was gone.

Oh, the loneliness of mind in which he threaded his way through the dark and narrow streets, where the snow already lay deeply! With what sinking of the heart he turned to look for the last time at the window where the light—the only one to be seen—still glimmered. How little could all the promptings of hope suffice against the sad and dark reality that he was leaving all he loved, and all who loved him, to adventure upon a world where all was bleak and friendless!

But not all his dark forebodings could equal hers from whom he had just parted. Loving her brother with an affection more like that of mother than sister, she had often thought over the traits of his character, where, with many a noble gift, the evil seeds of wrong teaching had left, like tall weeds among flowers, the baneful errors of inordinate self-esteem and pride. Ignorant of the career on which he was about to enter, Ellen could but speculate vaguely how such a character would be esteemed, and whether his native frankness and generosity would cover over, or make appear as foibles, these graver faults. Their own narrow fortunes, the many straits and privations of poverty, with all their cruel wounds to honest pride, and all their sore trials of temper, she could bear up against with an undaunted courage. She had learned her lesson in the only school wherein it is taught, and daily habit had instilled its own powers of endurance; but, for Frank, her ambition hoped a higher and brighter destiny, and now, in her solitude, and with a swelling heart, she knelt down and prayed for him. And, oh! if the utterings of such devotion never rise to Heaven or meet acceptance there, they at least bring balm to the spirit of him who syllables them, building up a hope whose foundations are above the casualties of humanity, and giving a courage that mere self-reliance never gave!

Little Hans not only came to awaken Frank, but to give him companionship for some miles of his way—a thoughtful kindness, for which the

youth's deep pre-occupation seemed to offer but a poor return. Indeed, Frank scarcely knew that he was not travelling in utter solitude, and all the skilful devices of the worthy Dwarf to turn the channel of his thoughts were fruitless. Had there been sufficient light to have surveyed the equipment of his companion, it is more than probable that the sight would have done more to produce this diversion of gloom than any arguments which could have been used. Master Roëckle, whose mind was a perfect storehouse of German horrors, earthly and unearthly, and who imagined that a great majority of the human population of the globe were either bandits or witches, had surrounded himself with a whole museum of amulets and charms of various kinds. In his cap he wore the tail of a black squirrel, as a safeguard against the "Forest Imp;" a large dried toad hung around his neck, like an order, to protect him from the evil eye; a duck's foot was fastened to the tassel of his boot, as a talisman against drowning; while strings of medals, coins, precious stones, blessed beads, and dried insects, hung round and about him in every direction. Of all the portions of his equipment, however, what seemed the most absurd was a huge pole-axe of the fifteenth century, and which he carried as a defence against mere mortal foes, but which, from its weight and size, appeared far more likely to lay its bearer low than inflict injury upon others. It had been originally stored up in the Rust Kammer, at Prague, and was said to be the identical weapon with which Conrad slew the giant at Leutmeritz, a fact which warranted Hans in expending two hundred florins in purchasing it; as, to use his own emphatic words, "It was not every day one knew where to find the weapon to bring down a giant."

As Hans, encumbered by his various adjuncts, trotted along beside his stalwart companion, he soon discovered that all his conversational ability —to exert which cost him so dearly—was utterly unattended to; he fell into a moody silence, and thus they journeyed for miles of way without interchanging a word. At last they came in sight of the little village of Hernitz Kretschen, whence by a by-road Frank was to reach the regular line that leads through the Höhlen Thal to the Lake of Constance, and where they were to part.

"I feel as though I could almost go all the way with you," said Hans, as they stopped to gaze upon the little valley where lay the village, and beyond which stretched a deep forest of dark pine trees, traversed by a single road.

"Nay, Hans," said Frank, smiling, as for the first time he beheld the strange figure beside him; "you must go back to your pleasant little village and live happily, to do many a kindness to others, as you have done to me to-day."

"I would like to take service with the Empress myself," said Hans, "if it were for some good and great cause, like the defence of the Church against the Turks, or the extermination of the race of dragons that infest the Lower Danube."

"But you forget, Hans, it is an Emperor rules over Austria now," said Frank, preferring to offer a correction to the less startling of his hallucinations.

"No, no, Master Frank, they have not deposed the good Maria Teresa—they would never do that. I saw her picture over the doorway of the Burgermeister, the last time I went to visit my mother in the Bregentzer Wald, and by the same token her crown and sceptre were just newly gilt—a thing they would not have done if she were not on the throne."

"What if she were dead, and her son too?" said Frank; but his words were scarce uttered when he regretted to have said them, so striking was the change that came over the Dwarf's features.

"If that were indeed true, Heaven have mercy on us!" exclaimed he, piously. "Old Frederic will have but little pity for good Catholics! But no, Master Frank, this cannot be. The last time I received soldiers from Neuremberg they wore the same uniforms as ever, and the 'Moriamur pro Rege nostro, M. T.' was in gold letters on every banner as before."

Frank was in no humour to disturb so innocent and so pleasing a delusion, and he gave no further opposition, and now they both descended the path which led to the little inn of the village. Here Hans insisted on performing the part of host, and soon the table was covered with brown bread and hard eggs, and those great massive sausages which Germans love, together with various flasks of Margräfler and other "Badisch" wines.

"Who knows," said Hans, as he pledged his guest by ringing his wine-glass against the other's, "if, when we meet again, thou wouldst sit down at the table with such as me."

"How so, Hanserl?" asked the boy, in astonishment.

"I mean, Master Franz, that you may become a Colonel, or perhaps a General, with mayhap the 'St. Joseph' at your button-hole, or the Maria Teresa around your neck; and if so, how could you take your place at the board with the poor toy-maker?"

"I am not ashamed to do so now," said Frank, haughtily; "and the Emperor cannot make me more a Gentleman than my birth has done. Were I to be ashamed of those who befriended me, I should both disgrace my rank and my name together."

"These are good words, albeit too proud ones," said Hans, thought-

fully. "As a guide through life, pride will do well enough when the roads are good and your equipage costly; but when you come upon mountain-paths and stony tracts, with many a wild torrent to cross, and many a dark glen to traverse, humility—even a child's humility—will give better teaching."

"I have no right to be other than humble!" said the boy; but the flashing brightness of his eyes, and the heightened colour of his cheek, seemed to contradict his words.

For awhile the conversation flagged, or was maintained in short and broken sentences, when at length Frank said,

"You will often go to see them, Hanserl; won't you? You'll sit with them, too, of an evening? for they will feel lonely now; and my father will like to tell you his stories about home, as he calls it still."

"That will I," said Hans; "they are the happiest hours of my life when I sit beside that hearth."

Frank drew his hand across his eyes, and his lips quivered as he tried to speak.

"You'll be kind to poor Ellen, too; she is so timid, Hans. You cannot believe how anxious she is, lest her little carvings should be thought unworthy of praise."

"They are gems! they are treasures of art!" cried Hans, enthusiastically.

"And my sweet Kate!" cried the boy, as his eyes ran over, while a throng of emotions seemed to stop his utterance.

"She is so beautiful!" exclaimed Hans, fervently. "Except the Blessed Maria at the Holy Cross, I never beheld such loveliness. There is the Angelus ringing; let us pray a blessing on them," and they both knelt down in deep devotion. Frank's lips never moved, but with swelling heart and clasped hands he remained fixed as a statue; while Hanserl in some quaint old rhyme uttered his devotions.

"And yonder is the dog-star, bright and splendid," said Hans, as he arose. "There never was a happier omen for the beginning of a journey. You'll be lucky, boy; there is the earnest of good fortune. That same star was shining along the path as I entered Baden, eighteen years ago; and see what a lucky life has mine been!"

Frank could not but smile at the poor Dwarf's appreciation of his fortune; but Hanserl's features wore a look that betokened a happy and contented nature.

"And yours has been a lucky life, Hanserl?" said he, half in question.

"Lucky? ay, that has it. I was a poor boy, barefooted and hungry

in my native forest—deformed, and stunted, too—a thing to pity—too weak to work, and with none to teach me, and yet even I was not forgotten by Him who made the world so fair and beautiful; but in my heart was planted a desire to be something—to do something, that others might benefit by. The children used to mock me as I passed along the road; but a voice whispered within me, 'Be of courage, Hanserl, they will bless thee, yet—they will greet thee with many a merry laugh and joyous cry, and call thee their own kind Hanserl: and so have I lived to see it! My name is far and wide over Germany. Little boys and girls know and speak of me amongst the first words they syllable; and from the Palace to the Bauer's hut, Hans Roëckle has his friends; and who knows, that when this poor clay is mingled with the earth, but that my spirit will hover around the Christmas-tree when glad voices call upon me! I often think it will be so."

Frank's eyes glistened as he gazed upon the Dwarf, who spoke with a degree of emotion and feeling very different from his wont.

"So you see, Master Franz," said he, smiling, "there are ambitions of every hue, and this of mine you may deem of the very faintest, but it is enough for me. Had I been a great painter, or a poet, I would have revelled in the thought that my genius adorned the walls of many a noble palace, and that my verses kindled emotions in many a heart that felt like my own; but as one whom nature has not gifted—poor, ignoble, and unlettered—am I not lucky to have found a little world of joyous hearts, and merry voices, who care for me and speak of me? Ay, and who would give me a higher place in their esteem than to Jean Paul, or Göthe himself."

The friends had but time to pledge each other in a parting glass, when the stage drove up by which Hans was to return to Baden. A few hurried words, half-cheering, half-sorrowful—a close embrace—one long and lingering squeeze of the hand.

"Farewell, kind Hanserl;"

"God guide thee, Franz;"—and they parted.

Frank stood in the little "Platz," where the crowd yet lingered, watching the retiring "Post," uncertain which way to turn him. He dreaded to find himself all alone, and yet he shrank from new companionship. The newly-risen moon, and the calm air, invited him to pursue his road; so he set out once more, the very exercise being a relief against his sad thoughts.

Few words are more easily spoken than "He went to seek his fortune;" and what a whole world lies within the narrow compass. A world of high-hearted hopes and doubting fear—of noble ambition to be won, and

glorious paths to be trod, mingled with tender thoughts of home and those who made it such. What sustaining courage must be his who dares this course and braves that terrible conflict—the toughest that ever man fought—between his own bright colouring of life and the stern reality of the world. How many hopes has he to abandon—how many illusions to give up. How often is his faith to be falsified and his trustfulness betrayed; and, worst of all, what a fatal change do these trials impress upon himself—how different is he, from what he had been.

Young and untried as Frank Dalton was in life, he was not altogether unprepared for the vicissitudes that awaited him; his sister Nelly's teachings had done much to temper the over-buoyant spirit of his nature, and make him feel that he must draw upon that same courage to sustain the present, rather than to gild the future.

His heart was sorrowful too, at leaving a home where unitedly they had, perhaps, borne up better against poverty. He felt, for his own heart revealed it—how much can be endured in companionship, and how the burden of misfortune—like every other load—is light when many bear it. Now, thinking of these things, now, fancying the kind of life that might lie before him, he marched along. Then he wondered whether the count would resemble his father. The Daltons were remarkable for strong traits of family likeness, not alone in feature, but in character—and what a comfort Frank felt in fancying that the old general would be a thorough Dalton in frankness and kindliness of nature, easy in disposition, with all the careless freedom of his own father! How he should love him, as one of themselves.

It is a well-known fact, that certain families are remarkable above others for the importance that they attach to the ties of kindred, making the boast of relationship always superior to the claims of self-formed friendships. This is perhaps more peculiarly the case among those who live little in the world, and whose daily sayings and doings are chiefly confined to the narrow circle of home. But yet it is singular, how long this prejudice—for perhaps it deserves no better name—can stand the conflict of actual life. The Daltons were a special instance of what we mean. Certain characteristics of look and feature distinguished them all, and they all agreed in maintaining the claim of relationship as the strongest bond of union; and it was strange, into how many minor channels this stream meandered. Every old ruin, every monument, every fragment of armour, or ancient volume associated with their name, assumed a kind of religious value in their eyes, and the word Dalton was a talisman to exalt the veriest trifle into the rank of relic. From his earliest infancy Frank had been taught these lessons. They were the traditions of the

parlour and the kitchen, and by the mere force of repetition became a part of his very nature. Corrig-O'Neal was the theme of every story. The ancient house of the family, and which, although by time's changes it had fallen into the hands of the Godfreys—from whom his mother came—was yet regarded with all the feelings of ancient pride. Over and over again was he told of the once princely state that his ancestors held there —the troops of retainers—the mounted followers that ever accompanied them. The old house itself was exalted to the rank of a palace, and its widespreading but neglected grounds spoken of like the park of royalty.

To see this old house of his father's, to behold with his own eyes the seat of their once greatness, became the passion of the boy's heart. Never did the Bedouin of the Desert long after Mecca with more heart-straining desire! To such a pitch had this passion gained on him, that, unable any longer to resist an impulse that neither left his thoughts by day nor his dreams by night, he fled from his school at Bruges, and when only ten years old, made his way to Ostend, and under pretence of seeking a return to his family, persuaded the skipper of a trading vessel to give him a passage to Limerick. It would take us too far from our road—already a long one—were we to follow his wanderings and tell of all the difficulties that beset the little fellow on his lonely journey. Enough that we say, he did at last reach the goal of his hopes; and, after a journey of eight long days, find himself at the ancient gate of Corrig-O'Neal.

At first the disappointment was dreadful. The proud mansion, of whose glorious splendour his imagination had created an oriental palace, was an antiquated brick edifice, in front of which ran a long terrace, once adorned with statues, but of which the pedestals alone remained. A few hedges of yew, with here and there the fragments of a marble figure or a fountain, showed that the old French château taste had once prevailed there; and of this a quaint straight avenue of lime trees, reaching directly from the door to the river, also bore evidence. The tone of sadness and desertion was on everything; many of the lower windows were walled up; the great door itself was fastened and barricaded in such a way as to show it had been long disused.. Not a creature was to be seen stirring about the place, and save that at night the flickering light of a candle might be descried from a small casement that looked upon the garden, the house might have been deemed uninhabited. Perhaps something in the mysterious desolation of the scene had its influence over the boy's mind; but as hour by hour he lingered in those silent woods, and lay in the deep grass watching the cloud shadows as they stole along, he grew fondly

attached to the place; now losing himself in some reverie of the long past, now following out some half-remembered narrative of his mother's childhood, when she herself dwelt there.

All his little resources of pocket-money expended,—his clothes, save such as he wore, sold,—he could scarcely tear himself from a scene that filled every avenue of his heart. The time, however, came, when a ship, about to sail for the Scheldt, gave him the opportunity of returning home; and now this was to be his last day at Corrig-O'Neal.

And what a day of conflicting thought was it—now half resolved to approach the house, and ask to see his uncle, and now repelled by remembering all his unkindness to his father. Then marvelling whether some change might not have taken place in the old man's mind, and whether in his lonely desolation he might not wish once more to see his kindred near him.

He knew not what to do, and evening found him still undecided; and sitting on a little rising spot, from which the view extended over the garden at the back of the house, and whence he had often watched the solitary light that marked the old man's vigils.

Wearied by long watching and thought, he fell asleep; and when he awoke, the light was gone—the light which hitherto had always burned till daybreak! and from the darkness it must now be far from that hour. While Frank wondered what this might mean, he was startled by hearing footsteps near him—at least so they sounded—on the gravel-walk of the garden, and in a few minutes after the grating sound of a key, and the opening of a small door which led out into the wood. He now perceived that a man was standing at the foot of the knoll, who seemed irresolute and undecided; for he twice returned to the door, once introduced the key, and again withdrew it, as if with a changed purpose. Suddenly he appeared to have made up his mind, for, stooping down, he began to dig with the greatest energy, stopping at intervals to listen, and again continuing his work when satisfied that he was unobserved.

The hour—the scene itself—the evident secrecy of the man, almost paralysed the boy with terror; nor was it till long after the turf was replaced, dry leaves and dead branches were strewn over the spot, and the man himself gone, that Frank gained courage to move away. This he did at first cautiously and timidly, and then with a speed that soon carried him far away from the spot. The following day he was at sea; and if at first the strange scene never left his thoughts, with time the impression faded away, till at length it assumed the indistinctness of a vision, or of some picture created by mere imagination.

When he did return home, he never revealed, except to Nelly, where

he had been, and the object for which he went; but, even to her, from some strange love of mystery, he told nothing of the last night's experience: this was a secret, which he hoarded like a miser's treasure, and loved to think that he only knew of. The stirring events of a schoolboy's life, at first, and subsequently the changeful scenes of opening manhood, gradually effaced the impression of what he had seen, or merely left it to all the indistinctness of a dream.

And thus are thoughts often sealed up in the memory for years—unnoticed and unknown—till, after a long interval, they are all called forth, and become the very pivots on which turn our destiny.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ONSLOWS.

THE little town of Baden was thrown into a state of considerable excitement by the unexpected arrival we have chronicled in a preceding chapter, and the host of "the Russie" reduced to the most uncommon straits to restore the effective of a staff, now brought down to the closest economy of retrenchment. Cooks, waiters, and housemaids, were sought after in every quarter, while emissaries were despatched right and left to replenish the larder and provide for the wants of the mighty "Englander." Nor was all the bustle and commotion limited to within the hotel, but extended throughout the village itself, where many a rustic pony, laid up in ordinary for the winter, was again trimmed and curried and shod, to be paraded before the windows with a scarlet-saddle cloth and a worsted tassel to the bridle, in all the seductive attraction of a palfry. Even flower girls made their appearance again with a few frost-nipped buds and leaves; while a bassoon and a triangle, voting themselves a band, gave horrid signs of their means of persecution.

Meanwhile were the fortunate individuals, for whose benefit these exertions were evoked, in the most blissful ignorance of all the interest they were awakening. From the first moment of their arrival none had even seen them. Waited upon by their own servants, scarcely heard, not even appearing at the windows, they were unconsciously ministering to a mystery that now engaged every tongue and ear around them. As, however, nothing of secrecy had any share in their proceedings, we have no scruple in invading the presence and introducing the reader to the company.

Sir Stafford Onslow was an immensely rich London Banker, who in his capacity of borough member had voted steadily with the Whigs for some five-and-twenty years; supporting them by all the influence of his wealth and family, and who now came abroad, in a pet of sulk with his party, on being refused the peerage. By nature generous, kind-hearted, and affectionate, the constant pressure of a more ambitious wife had involved him in a career to which neither his taste nor habits suited him. The fortune which he would have dispensed with dignity and munificence, he was eternally taught to believe should be the stepping-stone to something higher in rank. All his influence in the City, of which he was justly proud, he was told was a mere vulgar ambition in comparison with that a

coronet would bestow on him, and in fact, having believed himself the leading man of a great section in society, he was led to look upon his position with discontent, and fancy that his just claims were disregarded and denied. Lady Hester Onslow, who having once been a beauty and the admired belle of Royalty itself, had accepted the Banker in a moment of pique, and never forgave him afterwards the unhappy preference.

Belonging to a very ancient but poor family, few were surprised at her accepting a husband some thirty-odd years her senior; and it is probable that she would fully have recognised the prudence of her choice if, by the death of a distant relative in India, which occurred a few months after her marriage, she had not acquired a very large fortune. This sudden accession of wealth coming, as she herself said, "too late," embittered every hour of her after-life.

Had she been wealthy but a few months back, she had married the man she loved, or whom she thought she loved, the heartless, handsome, well-mannered Lord Norwood, a penniless Viscount, ruined before he came of age, and with no other means of support than the faculties which knavery had sharpened into talent.

Miss Onslow and her brother, both the children of a former marriage, were strikingly like their father, not alone in feature, but in the traits of his frank and generous character. They were devotedly attached to him, not the less, perhaps, from the circumstances of a marriage to which they were strongly opposed, and whose results they now saw in many a passage of discord and disagreement.

George and Sydney Onslow were both dark-complexioned and black-eyed, and had many traits of Spanish origin in appearance, their mother having been from that country. Lady Hester was a blonde, and affected to think that the southern tint was but an approximation to the negro. Nor was she less critical on their manners, whose joyous freedom she pronounced essentially vulgar. Such, in a few words, were the discordant elements which Fate had bound up as a family, and who now, by the sudden illness of Sir Stafford, were driven to seek refuge in the deserted town of Baden. Nor can we omit another who, although not tied to the rest by kindred, had been long a member of the circle. This was Dr. Grounsell, an old college friend of Sir Stafford's, and who, having lost every shilling of his fortune by a speculation, had taken up his home at the Banker's many years previous to his second marriage. Lady Hester's dislike to him amounted to actual hatred. She detested him for the influence he possessed over her husband—for the sturdiness of a character that resisted every blandishment—for a quaintness that certainly verged upon vulgarity, and, most of all, for the open and undisguised manner he always declared against every scheme for the attainment of a title.

As Sir Stafford's physician, the only one in whom he had confidence, the Doctor was enabled to stand his ground against attacks which must have conquered him; and by dint of long resistance and a certain obstinacy of character he had grown to take pleasure in an opposition, which, to a man of more refinement and feeling, must have proved intolerable; and although decidedly attached to Sir Stafford and his children, it is probable that he was still more bound to them by hate to "my lady," than by all his affection for themselves.

Grounsell detested the Continent, yet he followed them abroad, resolved never to give up an inch of ground uncontested; and although assailed by a thousand slights and petty insults, he stood stoutly up against them all, defying every effort of fine ladyism, French cookery, homœopathy, puppyism, and the water-cure, to dislodge him from his position. There was very possibly more of dogged malice in all this, than amiability or attachment to his friends, but it is due to the Doctor to say, that he was no hypocrite, and would never have blinked the acknowledgment, if fairly confronted with the charge.

Although if it had not been for my lady's resentful notice of the ministerial neglect, the whole family would have been snugly domesticated in their beautiful villa beside the Thames at Richmond, she artfully contrived to throw the whole weight of every annoyance they experienced upon every one's shoulders rather than her own; and as she certainly called to her aid no remarkable philosophy against the inconveniences of travel, the budget of her grievances assumed a most imposing bulk.

Dressed in the very perfection of a morning costume, her cap, her gloves, her embroidered slippers, all in the most accurate keeping with that assumed air of seclusion by which fine ladies compliment the visitor fortunate enough to be admitted to their presence, Lady Hester sat at a window, occasionally looking from the deep lace that bordered her handkerchief to the picturesque scene of mountain and river that lay before her. A fastidious taste might have found something to be pleased with in either, but assuredly her handsome features evinced no agreeable emotion, and her expression was that of utter "ennui" and listlessness.

At another window sat Sydney Onslow drawing; her brother standing behind her chair, and from time to time adding his counsels, but in a tone studiously low and whispered. "Get that shadow in something deeper Syd, and you'll have more effect in the distance."

"What is that I hear about effect and distance?" sighed out my lady. "You surely are not drawing?"

"Only sketching; making a hurried note of that wheel, and the quaint old-fashioned house beside it," said Sydney, diffidently.

"What a refinement of cruelty! The detestable noise of that mill kept me awake all night, and you mean to perpetuate the remembrance by a picture. Pray, be a good child and throw it out of the window."

Sydney looked up in her brother's face, where already a crimson flush of anger was gathering, but before she could reply he spoke for her. "The drawing is for me, Lady Onslow. You'll excuse me if I do not consent to the fate you propose for it."

"Let me look at it," said she, languidly, and the young girl arose and presented the drawing to her. "How droll!" said she, laughing; "I suppose it is peculiar to Germany, that water can run up hill."

"The shadow will correct that," said Sydney, smiling; "and when the foreground is darker——" A violent slam of the door cut short the explanation. It was George Onslow, who, too indignant at the practised impertinence toward his sister, dashed out of the room in a passion.

"How underbred your brother will persist in being, my love," said she, calmly; "that vile trick of slamming a door, they learn, I'm told, in the Guards' Club. I'm sure I always thought it was confined to the melodrames one sees at the Porte St. Martin."

At this moment a servant appeared at the door. "Colonel Haggerstone's compliments, my lady, and begs to know how Sir Stafford is to-day."

"Something better," replied she, curtly; and as the man disappeared, she added:

"Whose compliments did he say?"

"I did not hear the name—it sounded like Haggerstone."

"Impossible, child; we know of no such person. What hour is it?"

"A few minutes past two."

"Oh, dear! I fancied it had been four—or five—or six," sighed she, drearily.

"The amiable Doctor has not made his report to-day of your papa, and he went to see him immediately after breakfast."

"He told George that there was no amendment," said Sydney, gravely.

"He told George! Then he did not deign to tell me."

"You were not here at the moment. It was as he passed through the room hurriedly."

"I conclude that I was in my dressing-room. But it is only in keeping with Mr. Grounsell's studied disrespect—a line of conduct I grieve to see him supported in by members of this family."

"Mr. Alfred Jekyl, my lady," said a servant, "with inquiry for Sir Stafford."

"*You* appear to know best, my dear, how your papa is. Pray answer that inquiry."

"Sir Stafford is not better," said Sydney, to the servant.

"Who can all these people be, my dear?" said Lady Hester, with more animation of manner than she had yet exhibited. Jekyl is a name one knows. There are Northamptonshire Jekyls, and, if I mistake not, it was a Jekyl married Lady Olivia Drossmore, was it not? Oh, what a fool I am to ask *you*, who never know anything of family or connexion! And yet I'm certain I've told you over and over the importance—the actual necessity of this knowledge. If you only bestowed upon Burke a tithe of the patience and time I have seen you devote to Lyell, you'd not commit the shocking mistake you fell into t'other day of discussing the Duchess of Dartley's character with Lord Brandford, from whom she was divorced. Now, you'd never offend quartz and sandstone by miscalling *their* affinities. But here comes the Doctor."

If Doctor Grounsell had been intended by nature to outrage all ultra-refined notions regarding personal appearance, he could not possibly have been more cunningly fashioned. Somewhat below the middle size, and squarely formed, his legs did not occupy more than a third of his height; his head was preternaturally large, and seemed even larger from a crop of curly yellowish hair, whose flaring ochre only rescued it from the imputation of being a wig. His hands and feet were enormous, requiring a muscular effort to move them that made all his gestures grotesque and uncouth. In addition to these native graces, his clothes were always made much too large for him, from his avowed dislike to the over-tightening and squeezing of modern fashion.

As his whole life had been passed in the superintendence of a great military hospital in the East, wherein all his conversations with his brethren were maintained in technicalities, he had never converted the professional jargon into a popular currency, but used the terms of art upon all occasions, regardless of the inability of the unmedical world to understand him.

"Well, Sir, what is your report to-day?" said Lady Onslow, assuming her very stateliest of manners.

"Better, and worse, madam. The arthritis relieved, the cardiac symptoms more imminent."

"Please to bear in mind, Sir, that I have not studied at Apothecaries' Hall."

"Nor I, madam, but at Edinburgh and Aberdeen, in the faculties of medicine and surgery," said Grounsell, drawing down his waistcoat, and arranging himself in what he considered an order of battle.

"Is papa better, Doctor?" said Sydney, mildly.

"The articular affection is certainly alleviated, but there is mischief here," said Grounsell, placing his hand over his heart; "fibrous tissues, my dear Miss Onslow,—fibrous tissues are ticklish affairs."

"Is this advice to be construed in a moral rather than a medical sense?" said Lady Onslow, with a malicious smile.

"Either, or both," replied the Doctor. "The heart will always be highly susceptible of nervous influence."

"But papa——" broke in Sydney, eagerly.

"Is suffering under metastasis—migratory gout, it may be termed—changing from articular to large organic structures."

"And, of course, you are giving him the old poisons that were in use fifty years ago?"

"What do you mean, madam," said Grounsell, sternly.

"That shocking thing that drives people mad—colocynth, or colchicum, or something like that. You know what I mean?"

"Happily for me, madam, I can guess it."

"And are you still as obstinate as ever about the globules?"

"The Homœopathic humbug?"

"If you are polite enough so to designate what I put the most impicit trust in. But I warn you, Sir, I mean to exert my just and rightful influence with Sir Stafford; and in case a very great change does not appear to-morrow, I shall insist upon his trying the aconite."

"If you do, madam, the Insurance Offices shall hear of it!" said Grounsell, with a sternness that made the threat most significant.

"I'll send for that man from Heidelberg at once, Sydney," said Lady Hester, as, pale with passion, she seated herself at her writing table.

"Take care what you do, madam," said Grounsell, approaching where she sat, and speaking in a low and solemn voice. "Let not any feeling of displeasure with me induce you to an act of rashness—or imprudence. My old friend's state is critical; it may at any moment become dangerous. I am convinced that what I am doing offers the most reasonable hope of serving him. Take care lest you weaken his confidence in me, when he may not be prepared to repose it in another."

"Here, Sydney, you write German; and it is possible he may not read French. This is his name—I got it in Paris—Graëffnell. Tell him to come at once—in fact, let François take a carriage for him."

Sydney Onslow looked at her mother and then at the Doctor. At the latter her glance was almost imploring, but he never noticed it, turning abruptly toward the window without uttering a word.

"Can you consult with him, Doctor?" asked Sydney, timidly.

"Of course not; he's a mountebank."

"Write, as I bade you, Miss Onslow," said Lady Hester. "Dr. Graeff-

well is one of the first men in Germany. Lady Heskisson sent for him when the Earl fell ill at Wiesbaden."

"And the Countess was a widow in four days after. Don't forget the *dénouement* of the story, madam."

Sydney dropped the pen, and her hands fell powerless to her side. There was something in the sternness of the Doctor that seemed to awe even Lady Onslow, for she made no reply; while Grounsell, seeing his advantage, left the room at once, without further parley.

Our readers will probably forgive us, if we follow his example, and not remain to listen to the eloquent monologue in which Lady Onslow lamented her sad condition in life. Not only did she bewail her destiny, but like one of those classic personages the Greek Chorus presents us to, she proceeded to speculate upon every possible mischance futurity might have in store for her, ingeniously inventing "situations," and devising "predicaments" that nothing less gifted than a self-tormenting imagination can conceive. Leaving her to all the pleasure such a pastime can give, we shall quit the house, and, although a cold, raw evening is closing in, wander out into the street.

CHAPTER V.

THE PATIENT.

ALONG the dark and narrow street, over which the coming night cast a dreary shadow, a single lamp was seen to shine at the door of Ludwig Kraus, the apothecary; a beacon, it is but fair to add, lighted less with the hope of attracting custom, than in obedience to the requirement of the law, for Herr Kraus was a "state" official, and bound to conform to the dictates of the government. His shop was a small triangular space, in which there was barely room for the learned dispenser and a single client at the same moment, thus giving to all his interviews the secrecy of the confessional itself. Jars, phials, flasks, and drawers, rose on every side, not inscribed with the vulgar nomenclature of modern physic, but bearing the enigmatical marks and hieroglyphics known to Galen and Paracelsus. Arabic letters, dragons, strange monsters, and zodiacal signs, met the eye everywhere, and did not consort ill with the spare form and high bald head of the proprietor, whose quaint-figured dressing-gown and black velvet cap gave him a kind of resemblance to an alchemist in his workshop. As Grounsell approached the glass door and peeped in, the scene that presented itself rather assisted this illusion,

for straight in front of the little counter over which Kraus was leaning, sat the dwarf, Hans Roëckle, talking away with considerable animation, and from time to time seeming to expatiate upon the merits of a wooden figure which he held carefully in his hands. The small half-lighted chamber; the passive, motionless features of the chemist; the strange wild gestures of little Hans, as, in his tongue of mysterious gutturals, he poured out a flood of words, amazed Grounsell, and excited his curiosity to the utmost. He continued to gaze in for a considerable time, without being able to guess what it might mean, and at last abandoning all conjecture he resolved to enter. Scarcely had he touched the handle of the door, however, than the Dwarf seizing the figure, concealed it beneath the skirt of his fur mantle, and retired to a corner of the shop. Dr. Grounsell's errand was to obtain certain medicines for his patient, which, from his ignorance of German, he had taken the precaution to write down in Latin. He passed the paper in silence over the counter, and waited patiently as the chemist spelt out the words. Having read it through he handed back the paper with a few dry words, which being in his native tongue were totally incomprehensible.

"You must have these things, surely," exclaimed Grounsell; "they are the commonest of all medicines;" and then remembering himself he made signs in the direction of the drawers and phials to express his meaning. Again the chemist uttered some dozen words.

The Doctor produced his purse, where certain gold pieces glittered, as though to imply that he was willing to pay handsomely for his ignorance; but the other pushed it away, and shook his head in resolute refusal.

"This is too bad," muttered Grounsell, angrily. "I'll be sworn he has the things, and will not give them." The chemist motioned Hans to approach, and whispered a few words in his hearing, on which the Dwarf, removing his cap in courteous salutation, addressed Grounsell: "Highborn and much-learned Saar. De laws make no oder that doctoren have recht to write physics."

"What!" cried Grounsell, not understanding the meaning of the speech. Hans repeated it, more slowly, and at length succeeded in conveying the fact, that Physicians alone were qualified to procure medicines.

"But I am a doctor, my worthy friend, a physician of long standing."

"Dass ist possible—who knows?"

"I know, and I say it," rejoined the other, tersely.

"Ja! ja!" responded Hans, as though to say the theme were not worth being warm about, one way or t'other.

"Come, my dear Sir," said Grounsell coaxingly; "pray be good enough to explain that I want these medicines for a sick friend, who is now at the hotel here, dangerously ill of gout."

"Podagra—gout!" exclaimed Hans, with sudden animation, "and dese are de cure for gout."

"They will, I hope, be of service against it."

"You shall have dem—Saar—on one condition. That ist, you will visit aneder sick man mit gout—an Englessman, too—vehr ill—verh sick;—and no rich—you understan."

"Yes, yes; I understand perfectly. I'll see him with pleasure. Tell this worthy man to make up these for me, and I'll go along with you now."

"Gut! verh good," said Hans, as in a few words of German he explained to the apothecary that he might venture to transgress the law in the present case when the season was over, and no one to be the wiser.

As Hans issued forth to show the way, he never ceased to insist upon the fact that the present was not a case for a fee, and that the Doctor should well understand the condition upon which his visit was to be paid; and still inveighing on this theme, he arrived at the house where the Daltons dwelt. "Remember, too," said Hans, "that though they are poor, they are of guten stamm—how say you, noble?" Grounsell listened with due attention to all Hanserl's cautions, following, not without difficulty, his strange and guttural utterances.

"I will go before. Stay here," said Hans, as they gained the landing-place; and so saying he pushed open the door and disappeared.

As Grounsell stood alone and in the dark, he wondered within himself what strange chances should have brought a fellow-countryman into this companionship, for there was something so grotesque in Han's appearance and manner, that it routed all notion of his being admitted to any footing of friendly equality.

The door at length opened, and the Doctor followed Hans into a dimly-lighted room, where Dalton lay, half dressed, upon his bed. Before Grounsell had well passed the entrance, the sick man said, "I am afraid, Sir, that my little friend here has taken a bit of liberty with both of us, since I believe you wanted a patient just as little as I did a doctor."

The anxious, lustrous eye, the flushed cheek, and tremulous lip of the speaker, gave, at the same time, a striking contradiction to his words. Grounsell's practised glance read these signs rapidly, and drawing near the bed, he seated himself beside it, saying, "It is quite clear, Sir, that you are not well, and although, if we were both of us in our own country, this visit of mine would, as you observe, be a considerable liberty, seeing that we are in a foreign land, I hope you will not deem my intrusion of this nature, but suffer me, if I can, to be of some service to you."

Less the words themselves than a certain purpose-like kindliness in the speaker's manner, induced Dalton to accept the offer, and reply to

[illegible] to him. "No, no, Doctor," said [illegible] no great mischief brewing, after all. [illegible] a little. It was about a boy of [illegible] he's gone away to be a soldier with the [illegible] course—as who doesn't?—how hard it is to [illegible] now-a-days. If family or high connexion [illegible] off as our neighbours. We belong to the [illegible] that you know are full blood with the O'Neals of [illegible] the use of blood now?—devil a good it does a [illegible] better to have your father a cotton-spinner, or an [illegible] the descendant of Shane Mohr na Manna."

"[illegible] you are right," observed the Doctor, drily.

"[illegible] I am; I feel it myself, and I'm almost ashamed to tell it. [illegible] I. Peter Dalton, the last of them now; and may I never leave [illegible] if I could make a barony constable in the county where the [illegible] writ couldn't run once without our leave."

"But Ireland herself has changed more than your own fortunes," remarked Grounsell.

"That's true—that's true," sighed the sick man. "I don't remember the best days of it, but I've heard of them often and often from my father. The fine old times, when Mount Dalton was filled with company from the ground to the slates, and two lords in the granary; a pipe of port wine in the hall, with a silver cup beside it; the Modereen hounds, huntsmen and all, living at rack and manger, as many as fifty sitting down in the parlour, and I won't say how many in the servants' hall; the finest hunters in the west country in the stables—there was life for you! Show me the equal of that in the wide world."

"And what is the present condition of the scene of these festivities?" said Grounsell, with a calm, but searching look.

"The present condition?" echoed Dalton, starting up to a sitting posture, and grasping the curtain with a convulsive grip; "I can't tell you what it is to-day, this ninth of November, but I'll tell what it was when I left it, eighteen years ago. The house was a ruin; the lawn a common; the timber cut down; the garden a waste; the tenants beggared; the landlord an exile. That's a pleasant catalogue, isn't it?"

"But there must come a remedy for all this," remarked Grounsell, whose ideas were following out a very different channel.

"Do you mean by a poor-law? Is it by taxing the half ruined to feed the lazy? or by rooting out all that once was a gentry, to fill their places by greedy speculators from Manchester and Leeds? Is that your remedy? It's wishing it well I am! No; if you want to do good to the country, leave Ireland to be Ireland, and don't try to make Norfolk

of her. Let her have her own Parliament, that knows the people and their wants. Teach her to have a pride in her own nationality, and not to be always looking at herself in shame beside her rich sister. Give her a word of kindness now and then as you do the Scotch; but, above all, leave us to ourselves. We understand one another; you never did, nor never will. We quarrelled, and made friends again, and all went right with us. You came over with your Chancery Courts, and your police, and whenever we differed you never stopped till we were beggared or hanged."

"You take a very original view of our efforts at civilisation, I confess," said Grounsell, smiling.

"Civilisation! Civilisation! I hate the very sound of the word. It brings to my mind nothing but county gaols, bridewells, turnpikes, and ministers' money. If it wasn't for civilisation, would there be a receiver over my estate of Mount Dalton? would the poor tenants be racked for the rent, that I always gave time for? would there be a big poor-house, with its ugly front staring to the highway, as they tell me there is, and a police barrack to keep it company, opposite? I tell you again, Sir, that your meddling has done nothing but mischief. Our little quarrels you converted into serious animosities; our estrangements into the feuds of two opposing races; our very poverty, that we had grown accustomed to, you taught us to regard as a national disgrace, without ever instructing us how to relieve it; and there we are now on your hands—neither English in industry, nor Irish in submission—neither willing to work, nor content to be hungry!"

The Doctor saw by the agitated look and tone of the sick man that the subject was one of too much excitement for him, and hastened to change the topic by jocularly expressing a hope that he might prove more successful with him than England had been with his countrymen.

"I doubt it, Sir," said Dalton, gravely; "not thanking you the less for your kindness. I believe, like my poor country, that I'm past doctoring." He paused for a few seconds, and then added: "It's all fretting. It's thinking about the girls; Frank there is no fear of. That's what ails me."

Grounsell saw that to prolong his visit would be but to encourage a tone of depression that must prove injurious; so promising to return to see him in the morning, he shook Dalton's hand cordially, and followed Hans into the adjoining room, where writing materials were prepared for him.

The two girls were standing at the fire as he entered; and simple as was their dress, homely even to poverty, every trait of their costume, their looks, bespoke them of gentle blood. Their anxious glances as he came

the questions which the other proposed to hi[illegible] [illegible]y did not
he, after a few moments; "there is no grea[illegible]
The truth is, I was fretted—harassed a [illegible] [illegible] their
mine—I have only one—and he's gone [illegible] [illegible]ays
Austrians. You know, of course—as [illegible]
do anything for a young man now-a-d[illegible]
could do it, we'd be as well off as o[illegible]
Daltons of Garrigmore, that you kn[illegible]
Cappagh. But what's the use of [illegible] "He
man. It would be better to ha[illegible] [illegible]o fret for
iron-master than the descendant [illegible]

"I believe you are right," o[illegible] said the Doctor,

"I know I am; I feel it [illegible] [illegible]en laying his head
Here am I, Peter Dalton, [illegible] [illegible]ght. There were little
this bed, if I could make [illegible] [illegible] order and yet he hesi-
king's writ couldn't run [illegible] were compatible with their

"But Ireland herself [illegible] [illegible]azard of offending by question-
marked Grounsell. [illegible] raised his eyes, they fell upon the

"That's true—that [illegible] [illegible]d exhibited in the apothecary's shop,
the best days of it. [illegible] [illegible] near. It was a child sleeping at the
The fine old tim[illegible] [illegible]ts arms were entwined. The emaciated
the ground to the [illegible] [illegible]ed fasting and exhaustion, while in the
wine in the hall. [illegible] [illegible]erging upon death.
huntsmen and all [illegible] [illegible]e hastily, as he pointed with his pen to the
down in the [illegible]
the finest hu[illegible] [illegible]ound thus, frozen to death upon the Arlberg,"
you! Show [illegible] [illegible]ster carved that figure from a description of the

"And wh[illegible]
said Grou[illegible] [illegible]us was done by *you?*" said Grounsell slowly, as he

"The p[illegible] [illegible]he work to the artist.
ture, and [illegible] [illegible]ians, whose face beamed with delight: "is it not
what it [illegible] [illegible]onderful. Dass, I say, alway; none have taste now
I left [illegible] [illegible] to admire!"
mo[illegible] [illegible] to examine it better, Grounsell was struck by the ex-
th[illegible] [illegible] face, whereon a smile of trustfulness and hope seemed
[illegible] [illegible] rigid lines of coming death; so that the impression con-
w[illegible] [illegible] a victory over suffering, than of a terrible fate.

[illegible] [illegible]-taught, Sir; none even so much as assisted her by ad-
[illegible] proudly.

[illegible] be perhaps but too apparent from my efforts," said Ellen,
[illegible]

[illegible] artist, young lady," said Grounsell, bluntly, "but I am well

versed in every variety of the human expression in suffering; and of mere truth to nature, I can speak confidently. This is a fine work! nay—do not blush. I am not a flatterer. May I take it with me, and show it to others more conversant with art than I am."

"Upon one condition you may," said the girl in a low deep voice.

"Be it so; on any condition you wish."

"We are agreed then?"

"Perfectly."

"The figure is yours—nay Sir—Your promise!"

Grounsell stammered and blushed, and looked confused; indeed no man was less able to extricate himself from any position of embarrassment, and here the difficulties pressed on every side, for while he scrupled to accept what he deemed a gift of real value, he felt that they too had a right to free themselves from the obligation that his presence as a doctor imposed. At last he saw nothing better than to yield; and in all the confusion of a bashfully awkward man, he mumbled out his acknowledgments, and catching up the figure departed.

Hans alone seemed dissatisfied at the result, for as he cast his wistful looks after the wooden image, his eyes swam with his tears, and he muttered as he went some words of deep desponding cadence.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIRST VISIT.

The dreary weather of November showed no signs of "taking up." Lowering days of fog and gloom alternated with cold winds and sleet, so that all out-door occupation was utterly denied to that imprisoned party, who were left with so few resources to pass the time within. It is true they did not make the best of the bad. Lady Hester grew hourly more irritable and peevish. Sydney Onslow seldom left her room. George took to the hills every morning, and never returned before a late dinner; while the Doctor, when not with Sir Stafford, spent all his time at the Daltons, with whom he had already established a close intimacy.

Lady Hester had exhausted every possible means she could imagine to while away the hours; she had spent whole days in letter writing—folios of "tirades," to every one she could think of. She had all the carriages inspected, and the imperials searched, for books she well knew had been left behind. She had sent for the landlord's daughter to give her lessons in German, which she thought of learning during the week. She had

given a morning to the Italian boy with his white mice; and pored for hours long over the "Livre des Voyageurs," reading the names of friends who with better fortune had taken their departure for Italy. But at last there came an end even to these frail resources, and she was left utterly without an occupation to engage, or even a thought to employ her. The five minutes of morning altercation with Grounsell over, the dreary time was unbroken by a single event, or unchequered by a single hope. Sir Stafford was indeed recovering, but so slowly that weeks might be required 'ere he could proceed on his journey. How were they to be passed, was the fearful question to which she could find no answer. She looked with actual envy at the party of boors who played at dominos in the beerhouse opposite, and followed with longing eyes the little mail-cart as it left the village. If she could read German, there were scores of books at her service. If she could but take a charitable turn, there was poverty enough to give her occupation from morn till night. She never knew what it was to think seriously; for meditation is the manufacture that cannot work without its raw material, and with this her mind was not stored.

It was in this pitiable frame of mind she was walking up and down the drawing-room one morning just as the Doctor had taken his departure, and with him the last little scene that was to relieve the day, when the servant entered with the card of Colonel Haggerstone, and the daily repeated inquiry for Sir Stafford's health.

Had the gallant Colonel presented himself at Wilton Crescent, or the Villa, it is more than likely that the well-instructed porter had not visèd his passport, but at once consigned a name of such unimposing consonants to gentle obscurity, while such an entry in the visiting book had been coolly set down as a mistake. Not so now, however. Lady Hester took up the card, and, instead of the habitual curt rejoinder—"Sir Stafford is better," said, "You may tell Colonel Haggerstone that Lady Hester will receive him."

The gallant Colonel, who was negligently slapping his boots with his riding whip below, stairs, was not a little amazed at the message. There had been a time when he would have interpreted the favour most flatteringly. He would have whispered to himself "she has seen me passing the window—she was struck with me as I rode by." Time had, however, toned down these bright illusions, and he read the permission with a nearer approach to truth, as a fine lady caprice in a moment of "ennui." "I thought as much," muttered he to himself as he slowly ascended the stairs; "the blockade was too strictly enforced not to tell at last. No newspapers, no books, ha! ha! Couldn't help surrendering!"

The Colonel had by this time given his whiskers and moustaches the

last curl, thrown back his head into a position of calm dignity as the servant, throwing wide the folding doors, announced him. Advancing two paces and bowing low, Colonel Haggerstone said, "Your Ladyship will pardon the liberty, the very great liberty, I have taken in my respectful inquiries for some days past, but although probably not remembered by Sir Stafford, I once *did* enjoy the honour of his acquaintance—we met at Lord Kerrison's in Scotland."

Lady Onslow cut short this very uninteresting explanation by a bland but somewhat supercilious smile, that seemed to say, "What possible matter can it be," while at the same time she motioned to him to be seated.

"May I hope that Sir Stafford continues to improve," said he, bowing again.

"He's better to-day," said Lady Onslow, languidly. "Perhaps as well as any one can be in this wretched place. You heard, I suppose, of the series of misfortunes that befel us, and compelled us to return here."

The Colonel looked mildly compassionate and inquisitive. He anticipated the possible pleasure her Ladyship might feel in a personal narrative, and he was an accomplished listener. This time, however, he was wrong. Lady Onslow either did not think the occasion or the audience worth the trouble of the exertion, and merely said, "We had a break down somewhere with an odious name. Sir Stafford would travel by that road through the Höhlen Thal, where somebody made his famous march. Who was it?"

"Massena, I think," said the Colonel at a haphazard, thinking that at least the name was *ben trovato*, just as Sunday-school children father everything remarkable on "John the Baptist."

"Oh dear, no, it was Moreau. We stopped to breakfast at the little inn where he held his head quarters, and in the garden of which he amused himself in pistol-shooting—strange, was it not? Are you a good shot, Colonel?"

"Good among bad ones," said the Colonel, modestly.

"Then we must have a match. I am so fond of it. You have pistols of course?"

"I am fortunate enough to have a case of Schlessingers best, and at your Ladyship's disposal."

"Well, that is agreed upon. You'll be kind enough to select a suitable spot in the garden, and if to-morrow be fine—by the way, what is to-morrow;—not Sunday, I hope."

The Colonel relieved her anxieties by the assurance that the next day would be Monday, consequently that the present one was Sunday.

"How strange! One does make sad confusion in these things

abroad," said she, sighing. "I think we are better in England in that respect, don't you?"

The question was not a very clear one, but the Colonel never hesitated to give in his adhesion.

"Sir Stafford always took that view in the House, and consequently differed from his party, as well as about Ireland. Poor dear Ireland! what is to be done for her?"

This was a rather more embarrassing demand than the previous one, and the Colonel hemmed and coughed, and prepared for a speech of subtle generalities; but the dexterity was all unnecessary, for her Ladyship had already forgotten the theme, and everything about it, as she went on. "How I pity those dear Wreckingtons, who are condemned to live there. The Earl, you know, had promised solemnly that he would go any lengths for the party when he got his blue riband; and so they took him at his word, and actually named him to the Viceroyalty. It was a very cruel thing, but I hear nothing could be better than his conduct on hearing it: and dear Lady Wreckington insisted upon accompanying him. It was exactly like the story of—what's that man's name, who assisted in the murder of the Emperor Paul—Geroboffskoi, or something like that, and whose wife followed him to the mines."

The Colonel avowed that the cases were precisely alike, and now the conversation—if the word can be degraded to mean that bald disjointed chat—ran upon London people and events—their marriages, their dinners, their separations, coalitions, divorces, and departures; on all which themes Haggerstone affected a considerable degree of knowledge, although, to any one less occupied with themselves than her Ladyship, it would have been at once apparent that all his information was derived from the newspapers. It was at the close of a lamentation on the utter stupidity of everything and everywhere, that he adroitly asked where she meant to pass the winter.

"I wish I knew," said she, languidly. "The Dollingtons say Naples; the Upsleys tell us Rome; and, for my part, I pronounce for neither. Lady Dollington is my aversion, and the three Upsley girls, with their pink noses and red hair, are insufferable."

"What does your Ladyship think of Florence?" asked the Colonel, soothingly.

"Pretty much what I might of one of the Tonga islands. I know nothing of the place, the people, or the climate. Pray tell me about it."

"There is very little to say," said Haggerstone, shrugging his shoulders; "not but the place might be very agreeable, if there were some one of really fashionable standing to take the lead and give a tone to

the society; some one who would unite indisputable rank and wealth with personal graces, and thus, as it were, by prescriptive right, assume the first place. Then, I say, Florence would be second to no city of Italy. Would that your Ladyship would condescend to accept the vacant throne!"

"I!" said she, affecting astonishment; and then laughingly added: "Oh, no! I detest mock sovereignty. I actually shudder at the idea of the Lady Patroness part; besides, whom should one have to reign over? Not the Browns, and Smiths, and Perkinses; not the full-pensioned East Indians, the half-pay Colonels, and the no-pay Irish gentilities, that form the staple of small city society. You surely would not recommend me to such a sad pre-eminence."

The Colonel smiled flatteringly at her Ladyship's smartness, and hastened to assure her that such heresy was far from his thoughts; and then with a practised readiness ran over a list of foreign celebrities—French, Russian, and German—whose names, at least, clinked like the true metal.

This looked promisingly; it was very like cutting all English society, and had the appearance of something very exclusive, very impertinent, and very ungenerous; and now, she lent a willing ear as Haggerstone revealed a plan of operations for a whole winter campaign. According to his account, it was a perfect "terra incognita," where the territorial limits and laws might be laid down at will: it was a state which called for a great Dictatorship, and the sway of unlimited authority.

Now, Lady Hester had never, at least since her marriage, and very rarely even before it, been more than on the periphery of fashionable society. When she did obtain a footing within the charmed circle, it was by no prescriptive right, but rather on some ground of patronage, or some accidental political crisis, which made Sir Stafford's influence a matter of moment. There was, therefore, a flattery in the thought of thus becoming a leader in society; and she shrewdly remembered, that though there might be little real power, there would be all the tyranny of a larger sovereignty.

It is true she suffered no symptom of this satisfaction to escape her; on the contrary, she compassionated the "poor dear things" that thought themselves "the world," in such a place, and smiled with angelic pity at their sweet simplicity; but Haggerstone saw through all these disguises, and read her real sentiments, as a practised toad-eater never fails to do, where only affectation is the pretence. Adroitly avoiding to press the question, he adverted to Baden and its dreary weather; offered his books; his newspapers; his horses; his phaëton; and everything that was his, even his companionship as a guide to the best riding or walking roads, and, like

a clever actor, made his exit at the very moment when his presence became most desirable.

Lady Hester looked out of the window and saw, in the street beneath, the saddle-horses of the Colonel, which were led up and down, by a groom in the most accurate of costumes. The nags themselves, too, were handsome and in top condition. It was a little gleam of civilisation, in the midst of universal barrenness, that brought up memories, some of which at least were not devoid of pain, so far as the expression of her features might be trusted. "I wonder who he can be," said she musing. "It's a shocking name! Haggerstone. Perhaps Sir Stafford may remember him. It's very sad to think that one should be reduced to such people," so, with a slight sigh, she sat down to indulge in a mood of deep and sincere commiseration for herself and her sorrows.

From these reveries she was aroused by the arrival of a package of books and papers from the Colonel. They included some of the latest things of the day, both French and English, and were exactly the kind of reading she cared for, that half-gossipry that revolves around a certain set, and busies itself about the people and incidents of one very small world. There were books of travel by noble authors, and novels by titled authoresses; the one, as tamely well-bred and tiresome as, the others, were warm and impassioned—no bad corroborative evidence, by the way, of the French maxim, that the "safety of the Lady Georginas has an immense relation to the coldness of the Lord Georges." There were books of beauty, wherein loveliness was most aristocratic; and annuals where nobility condescended to write twaddle. There were analyses of new operas, wherein the list of the spectators was the only matter of interest, and better than these were the last fashions of "Longchamps," the newest bulletins of that great campaign which began in Adam's garden, and will endure to the "very crack of doom."

Lady Hester's spirits rallied at once from these well-timed stimulants; and when the party gathered together before dinner, George and his sister were amazed at the happy change in her manner.

"I have had a visitor," said she, after a short mystification; "a certain Colonel, who assumes to be known to your father, but I fancy will scarcely be remembered by him—he calls himself Haggerstone."

"Haggerstone!" said George, repeating the name twice or thrice. "Is not that the name of the man who was always with Arlington, and of whom all the stories are told?"

"As I never heard of Arlington's companion, nor the stories in question, I can't say. Pray enlighten us," said Lady Hester, tartly.

"Haggerstone sounds so like the name," repeated George to himself.

"So like what name? Do be good enough to explain."

"I am unwilling to tell a story which, if not justly attributable to the man, will certainly attach unpleasantly to his name hereafter."

"And in your excessive caution for yourself, you are pleased to forget me, Mr. Onslow. Pray remember that if I admit him to acquaintance——"

"But surely you don't mean to do so?"

"And why not?"

"In the first place, you know nothing about him."

"Which is *your* fault."

"Be it so. I have at least told you enough to inspire reserve and caution."

"Quite enough to suggest curiosity and give a degree of interest to a very commonplace character."

"Is he young, may I ask?" said George, with a half smile.

"No; far from it."

"Good looking?"

"Just as little."

"Very agreeable and well-mannered?"

"Rather prosy, and too military in tone for my taste."

"Does he come under the recommendatory 'firman' of any dear friend or acquaintance?"

"Nothing of the kind. There is his passport," said she, pointing to his visiting ticket.

"Your Ladyship used to be more difficult of access," said George, dryly.

"Very true; and so I may possibly become, again. To make selections from the world of one's acquaintance is a very necessary duty; but, as my father used to say, no one thinks of using a sieve for chaff."

"This gentleman is then fortunate in his obscurity."

"Here comes Miss Onslow," said Lady Hester, "who will probably be more grateful to me, when she learns that our solitude is to be enlivened by the gallant Colonel."

Sydney scanned over the books and journals on the table, and then quietly remarked, "If a man is to be judged of by his associates, these do not augur very favourably for the gentleman's taste."

"I see that you are both bent on making him a favourite of mine," said Lady Hester, pettishly; "and if Doctor Grounsell will only discover some atrocious circumstance in his history or character, I shall be prepared to call him 'charming.'"

The announcement of dinner fortunately broke up a discussion that already promised unfavourably; nor were any of the party sorry at the interruption.

CHAPTER VII.

A LESSON IN PISTOL SHOOTING.

THERE are two great currents which divide public opinion in the whole world, and all mankind may be classed into one or other of these wide categories—"The people who praise, and the people who abuse everything." In certain sets, all is as it ought to be, in this life. Everybody is good, dear, and amiable. All the men are gifted and agreeable; all the women fascinating and pretty. An indiscriminate shower of laudations falls upon everything of everybody, and the only surprise the hearer feels is how a world, so chuck full of excellence, can possibly consist with what one reads occasionally in the *Times* and the *Chronicle.*

The second category is the Roland to this Oliver, and embraces those who have a good word for nobody, and in whose estimation the Globe is one great penal settlement—the overseers being neither more nor less than the best-conducted among the convicts. The chief business of these people in life is to chronicle family disgraces and misfortunes, to store their memories with defalcations, frauds, suicides, disreputable transactions at play, unfair duels, seductions, and the like, and to be always prepared, on the first mention of a name, to connect its owner, or his grandmother, with some memorable blot, or some unfortunate event of years before. If the everlasting laudations of the one set make life too sweet to be wholesome, the eternal disparagement of the other renders it too bitter to be enjoyable; nor would it be easy to say whether society suffers more from the exercise of this mock charity, on the one side, or the practice of universal malevolence, on the other.

Perhaps our readers will feel grateful when we assure them that we are not intent upon pushing the investigation further. The consideration was forced upon us by thinking of Colonel Haggerstone, who was a distinguished member of class No. 2. His mind was a police sheet, or rather like a page of that celebrated "Livre Noir," wherein all the unexpiated offences of a nation are registered. He knew the family disasters of all Europe, and not a name could be mentioned in society to which he could not tag either a seduction, a fraud, a swindle, or a poltroonery; and when such revelations are given prosaically, with all the circumstances of date, time, and place, unrelieved by the slightest spice of wit

or imagination, but simply narrated as "Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire" of an individual, the world is very apt to accept them as evidences of knowledge of life, rather than what they really are—proofs of a malignant disposition. In this way Haggerstone seemed to many, the mere "old soldier" and nothing more; whereas, if nature had given him either fancy or epigrammatic smartness, he would have been set down for the incarnation of slander.

It may seem strange that Lady Hester, who had lived a good deal in the world, should never have met a character of this type, but so it was; she belonged to a certain "fast set" in society, who seem to ask for a kind of indemnity for all they do, by never, on any occasion, stopping to criticise their neighbours. This semblance of good nature is a better defensive armour than the uninitiated know of, enlisting all loose sympathies with its possessor, and even gaining for its advocates that great floating majority who speak much and think little.

In London, Haggerstone would have at once appeared the very "worst ton," and she would have avoided the acquaintance of a man so unhappily gifted; but here, at Baden, with nothing to do, none to speak to, he became actually a prize, and she listened to him for hours with pleasure as he recounted all the misdeeds of those "dear, dear friends" who had made up her own "world." There was at heart, too, the soothing flattery that whispered, "He can say nothing of *me;* the worst he can hint is, that I married a man old enough to be my father, and if I did, I am heartily sorry for the mistake."

He was shrewd enough soon to detect the family differences that prevailed, and to take advantage of them, not by any imprudent or ill-advised allusion to what would have enlisted her Ladyship's pride in opposition, but, by suggesting occupations and amusements, that he saw would be distasteful to the others, and thus alienate her more and more from their companionship. In fact his great object was to make Lady Hester a disciple of that new school which owns Georges Sand for its patron, and calls itself "Lionne." It would be foreign to our purpose here were we to stop and seek to what social causes this new sect owes existence. In a great measure it may be traced to the prevailing taste of men for club life—to that lounging ease which exacts no tribute of respect or even attention, but suffers men to indulge their caprices to any extent of selfishness; thus unfitting them for ladies' society, or only such society as that of ladies condescending enough to unsex themselves, and to talk upon themes and discuss subjects that usually are reserved for other audiences.

Certain clever men liked this liberty—these receptions were a kind of

free port, where all could be admitted duty free. Nothing was forbidden in this wide tariff, and so, conversation, emancipated from the restriction of better society, permitted a thousand occasions of display, that gradually attracted people to these reunions, and made all other society appear cold, formal, and hypocritical by contrast. This new invention had not reached England when Lady Hester quitted it, but she listened to a description of its merits with considerable interest. There were many points, too, in which it chimed in with her notions. It had novelty, liberty, and unbounded caprice amongst its recommendations; and lastly, it was certain to outrage the "Onslows." It was a "part" which admitted of any amount of interpolations. Under its sanction she would be free to say anything, know any one, and go anywhere. Blessed immunity that permitted all and denied nothing!

With all the vulgar requirements of "Lionism" she was already sufficiently conversant. She could ride, drive, shoot, and fence; was a very tolerable billiard player, and could row a little. But with the higher walks of the craft she had made no acquaintance; she had not learned to swim, had never smoked, and was in dark ignorance of that form of language which, half mystical and all-mischievous, is in vogue with the members of this sect. That she could acquire all these things rapidly and easily the Colonel assured her, and, by way of "matriculating," reminded her of her challenge respecting the pistol shooting, for which he had made every preparation in the garden of the hotel.

True to his word, he had selected a very pretty alley, at the end of which rose a wall sufficiently high to guard against accidents from stray shots. On a table were displayed, in all the dandyism such objects are capable of, a handsome case of pistols, with all the varied appliances of kid leather for wadding, bullet-moulds, rammers, hammers, screws, and rests, even to a russia-leather bound note-book, to record the successes, nothing had been forgotten; and Lady Hester surveyed with pleasure preparations which at least implied an anxious attention to her wishes.

"Only fancy the barbarism of the land we live in," said he; "I have sent emissaries on every side to seek for some of those plaster figures so common in every city of Europe, but in vain. Instead of your Ladyship cutting off Joan of Arc's head, or sending your bullet through some redoubtable enemy of England, you must waste your prowess and skill upon an ignoble jar of porcelain, or a vase of Bohemian glass; unless, indeed, my last messenger shall have proved more fortunate, and I believe such is the case." As he spoke his servant came up with a small parcel carefully enveloped in paper.

"I have got this figure, Sir," said he, "with the greatest difficulty,

and only indeed by pretending we wanted it as an ornamental statue. The little fellow of the toy-shop parted with it in tears, as if it had been his brother."

"It is very beautiful!" said Lady Hester, as she surveyed a small wooden statue of Goethe's "Marguerite," in the attitude of plucking the petals of a flower to decide upon her lover's fidelity.

"A mere toy!" said Haggerstone. "These things are carved by every child in the Black Forest. Does your Ladyship think you could hit the feather of her cap without hurting the head?"

"I couldn't think of such profanation," replied she; "there is really something very pretty in the attitude and expression. Pray let us reserve her for some less terrible destiny."

But the Colonel persisted in assuring her that these were the commonest nick-nacks that adorned every peasant's cabin—that every boor with a rusty knife carved similar figures, and in the midst of his explanations he placed the statue upon a little stone pillar about twenty paces off.

Lady Hester's objection had been little more than a caprice; indeed, had she been convinced that the figure was a valuable work of art, she would have felt rather flattered than otherwise at the costliness of the entertainment provided for her. Like Cleopatra's pearl it would have had the charm of extravagance at least; but she never gave the Colonel credit for such gallantry, and the more readily believed all he said on the subject.

Colonel Haggerstone proceeded to load the pistols with all that pomp and circumstance so amusingly displayed by certain people on like occasions. The bullets encased in little globes of chamois, carefully powdered with emery, were forced down the barrels by a hammer, the hair trigger adjusted, and the weapon delivered to Lady Hester with due solemnity.

"If I go wide of the mark, Colonel, I beg you to remember that I have not had a pistol in my hand for above three years; indeed, it must be nearly four years since I shot a match with Lord Norwood."

"Lord Norwood! indeed," said Haggerstone. "I wasn't aware that your Ladyship had ever been his antagonist."

Had not Lady Hester been herself anxious to hide the confusion the allusion to the Viscount always occasioned her, she could not have failed to remark how uncomfortably astonished was Haggerstone at the mention of that name. Nervously eager to do something—anything that might relieve her embarrassment—she pulled the trigger; but the aim was an erring one, and no trace of the bullet to be seen.

"There's no use in looking for it, Colonel Haggerstone," said she, pettishly; "I'm certain I was very wide of the mark."

"I'm positive I saw the plaster drop from the wall somewhere here abouts," said the complaisant Colonel, pointing to a spot close beside the figure. "Yes, and the twigs are broken here."

"No matter; I certainly missed, and that's quite enough. I told you I should, before I fired; and when one has the anticipation of failure, it is so easy to vindicate the impression."

It was in evident chagrin at her want of success that she spoke, and all her companion's flatteries went for nothing. Meanwhile, he presented the second pistol, which, taking hastily, and without giving herself time for an aim, she discharged with a like result.

"I'll not try again," said she, pettishly. "Either the pistols don't suit me, or the place or the light is bad. Something is wrong, that's certain."

Haggerstone bit his lip in silence, and went on reloading the pistols without trusting himself to reply. A little conflict was going on within him, and all his intended flatteries for her Ladyship were warring with the desire to display his own skill, for he was a celebrated shot, and not a little vain of the accomplishment. Vanity carried the day at last, and, taking up the weapon, he raised it slowly to a level with his eye. A second or two he held it thus, his hand steady as a piece of marble.

"I have taken my aim, and now you may give the word for me to fire when you please," said he, turning his eyes from the object, and looking straight at Lady Hester.

She stared at him as if to reassure herself of the direction of his glance, and then called out "Fire!" The shot rang out clear and sharp; with it arose a shrill cry of agony, and straight before them, at the foot of the pillar, lay something which looked like a roll of clothes, only that by its panting motion it indicated life. Haggerstone sprang forward, and to his horror discovered the Dwarf, Hans Roëckle, who, with his arm broken, lay actually bathed in blood. With his remaining hand he clasped the little statue to his bosom, while he muttered to himself the words "gerettet—saved! saved!"

While Lady Hester hurried for assistance, Haggerstone bound up the bleeding vessels with his handkerchief; and in such German as he could command, asked how the accident had befallen.

A few low muttering sounds were all the Dwarf uttered, but he kissed the little image with a devotion that seemed like insanity. Meanwhile the Colonel's servant coming up, at once recognised Hans, and exclaimed,

To the rescue!

"It is the little fellow of the toy-shop, Sir. I told you with what reluctance he parted with this figure. He must be mad, I think."

The wild looks and eager expressions of the Dwarf, as he clutched the image and pressed it to his heart, seemed to warrant the suspicion; and Haggerstone thought he could read insanity in every line of the poor creature's face. To the crowd that instantaneously gathered around the inn door, and which included many of his friends and acquaintances, Hans would give no other explanation of the event than that it was a mere accident; that he was passing, and received the shot by chance; nothing more.

"Is he not mad, or a fool?" asked Haggerstone of the innkeeper.

"Neither, Sir; Hans Roëckle is an old and respected burgher of our town, and although eccentric and odd in his way, is not wanting for good sense or good nature."

"Ay, ay!" cried two or three of his townsfolk, to whom the landlord translated the Colonel's question; "Hans is a kind-hearted fellow, and if he loves his dolls and wooden images over much, he never lacks in affection for living creatures."

While these and such like observations were making around him, the Dwarf's wounds were being dressed by his friend Ludwig Kraus, an operation of considerable pain, that the little fellow bore with heroic tranquillity. Not a word of complaint, not a syllable of impatience escaped him, and while from his half-closed lips a low muttered exclamation of "Saved! saved!" came forth from time to time, the bystanders deemed it the utterance of gratitude for his own escape with life.

But once only did any expression of irritation burst from him. It was when Haggerstone pulled out his purse, and with an ostentatious display of munificence asked him to name his recompense. "Take me home; take me hence!" said Hans, impatiently. "Tell the rich 'Englander,' that there are wounds for which sorrow would be an ample cure, but there are others which insult is sure to fester."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NIGHT EXCURSION.

The remainder of the day after the Dwarf's misfortune was passed by Lady Hester in a state of feverish irritability. Sorry as she felt for the "sad accident"—her own phrase, she was still more grieved for the effects it produced upon herself: the jar and worry of excited feelings—the uncomfortableness of being anxious about anything or anybody.

Epicurean in her code of manners as of morals, she detested whatever occasioned even a passing sensation of dissatisfaction, and hence upon the luckless Colonel, the author of the present evil, fell no measured share of her displeasure. "He should have taken precautions against such a mishap—he ought to have had sufficient presence of mind to have arrested his aim—he should have fired in the air—in fact, he ought to have done anything but what he did do;" which was, to agitate the nerves, and irritate the sensibilities, of a fine lady.

The conduct of the family, too, was the very reverse of soothing. Sir Stafford's gout had relapsed on hearing of the event. George Onslow's anger was such that he could not trust himself to speak of the occurrence; and as for Sydney, though full of sorrow for the Dwarf, she had not a single sympathy to bestow upon her stepmother. "Were there ever such people?" she asked herself again and again. Not one had taken the trouble to ask how *she* bore up, or express the slightest anxiety for the consequences the shock might occasion *her*.

Grounsell was actually insufferable; and even hinted that if anything untoward were to happen, the very grave question might arise as to the guilt of the parties who appeared in arms without a Government permission. He reminded her ladyship that they were not in England; but in a land beset with its own peculiar prejudices and notions, and in nothing so rigorous as in the penalties on accidents that took their origin in illegality.

As for the wound itself, he informed her that the bullet had "traversed "the deltoid, but without dividing the brachial artery; and, for the pre-"sent, sympathetic fever and subcutaneous inflammation would be the "worst consequences." These tidings were neither very re-assuring nor intelligible; but all her cross-examination could elicit little better.

"Has Colonel Haggerstone been to see him?" asked she.

"No, madam. His groom called with a present of two florins."

"Oh! impossible, sir."

"Perfectly true, Madam. I was present when the money was returned to the man by a young lady, whose attentions to the sufferer saved him the pain this indignity would have cost him."

"A young lady, did you say? How does he happen to be so fortunate in his attendance?"

"Her father chances to be this poor creature's tenant, and many mutual acts of kindness have passed between them."

"Not even scandal could asperse her motives in the present case," said Lady Hester, with an insolent laugh. "It looked hardly human when they lifted it from the ground."

"Scandal has been guilty of as gross things, madam," said Grounsell, sternly, "but I would defy her here, although there is beauty enough to excite all her malevolence." And with this speech, delivered with a pointedness there was no mistaking, the Doctor left the room.

Impressions, or what she herself would have called "feelings," chased each other so rapidly through Lady Hester's mind, that her whole attention was now directed to the young lady of whom Grounsell spoke, and whose singular charity excited all her curiosity. There is a strange tendency to imitation among those whose intelligences lie unexercised by any call of duty or necessity. No suggestion coming from within, they look without themselves for occupation and amusement. Lady Hester was a prominent disciple of this school. All her life she had been following, eager to see whether the fashions that became, or the pleasures that beguiled others, might not suit herself. If such a course of existence inevitably conduces to ennui and discontent, it is no less difficult to strive against, and they who follow in the track of others' footsteps have all the weariness of the road without the cheering excitement of the journey.

If the young lady found pleasure in charity, why shouldn't she? Benevolence, too, for aught she knew, might be very becoming. There were a hundred little devices of costume and manner which might be adopted to display it. What a pretty version of the good Samaritan modernised one might give in a Shetland scarf and a cottage bonnet—the very thing Chalons would like to paint; and what an effective "interior" might be made of the Dwarf's chamber, crowded with rude peasant faces, all abashed and almost awestruck as she entered.

The longer she dwelt upon the theme the more fascinating it became. "It would be really worth while to realise," said she to herself at last, —"so amusing—and so odd, an actual adventure; besides, in point of fact, it was her duty to look after this poor creature." Just so: there never was a frivolous action or a notion struck out by passing folly, for which its author could not find a justification in PRINCIPLE! We are

everlastingly declaring against the knaveries and deceptions practised on us in life; but if we only took count of the cheats we play off upon ourselves, we should find that there are no such impostors as our own hearts.

Nobody was ever less likely to make this discovery than Lady Hester. She believed herself everything that was good and amiable; she knew that she was handsome. Whatever contrarieties she met with in life, she was quite certain they came not from any fault of hers; and if self-esteem could give happiness she must have enjoyed it. But it cannot. The wide neutral territory between what we think of ourselves and others think of us, is filled with daring enemies to our peace, and it is impossible to venture into it without a wound to self love.

To make her visit to the Dwarf sufficient of an adventure, it must be done in secret. Nobody should know it but Celestine, her maid, who should accompany her. Affecting a slight indisposition she could retire to her room in the evening, and then there would be abundant time to put her plan into execution. Even these few precautions against discovery were needless, for George did not return to dinner on that day, and Sydney made a headache an excuse for not appearing.

Nothing short of the love of adventure and the indulgence of a caprice could have induced Lady Hester to venture out in such a night. The rain fell in torrents, and swooped along the narrow streets in channels swollen to the size of rivulets. The river itself, fed by many a mountain stream, fell tumbling over the rocks with a deafening roar, amid which the crashing branches of the pine trees were heard at intervals. What would not have been her anxieties and lamentings if exposed to such a storm when travelling, surrounded with all the appliances that wealth can compass, and yet now, of her own free will, she wended her way on foot through the darkness and the hurricane, not only without complaining, but actually excited to a specious of pleasure in the notion of her imaginary heroism.

The courier who preceded her, as guide, enjoyed no such agreeable illusions, but muttered to himself, as he went, certain reflections by no means complimentary to the whims of fine ladies. While Mademoiselle Celestine inwardly protested that anything, "not positively wrong," would be dearly purchased by the dangers of such an excursion.

"Gregoire! Gregoire! where is he now?" exclaimed Lady Hester, as she lost sight of her guide altogether.

"Here, mi ladi," grunted out the courier, in evident pain; "I fail to break my neck over de stone bench."

"Where's the lantern, Gregoire?"

"Blowed away, zum Teufel, I believe."

"What's he saying, Celestine?—what does he mean?"

But mademoiselle could only answer by a sob of agony over her capote de Paris, flattened to her head like a Highland bonnet.

"Have you no light? You must get a light, Gregoire."

"Impossible, mi ladi, dere's nobody livin' in dese houses at all."

"Then you must go back to the inn for one; we'll wait here till you return."

A faint shriek from Madememoiselle Celestine expressed all the terror such a proposition suggested.

"Mi ladi will be lost if she remain here all alone."

"Perdue! sans doute!" exclaimed Celestine.

"I am determined to have my way, do as I bade you, Gregoire; return for a light, and we'll take such shelter as this door affords in the meanwhile."

It was in no spirit of general benevolence that Gregoire tracked his road back to the "Russie," since, if truth must be told, he himself had extinguished the light, in the hope of forcing Lady Hester to a retreat. Muttering a choice selection of those pleasant phrases with which his native German abounds, he trudged along, secretly resolving that he would allow his mistress a reasonable interval of time to reflect over her madcap expedition. Meanwhile, Lady Hester and her maid stood shivering and storm-beaten beneath the drip of a narrow eve. The spirit of opposition alone sustained her ladyship at this conjuncture, for she was wet through, her shoes soaked with rain, and the cold blast that swept along seemed as if it would freeze the very blood in her heart.

Celestine could supply but little of comfort or consolation, and kept repeating the words, "Quelle aventure! quelle aventure!" in every variety of lamentation.

"He could easily have been back by this," said Lady Hester, after a long pause, and an anxious attention to every sound that might portend his coming; "I'm certain it is full half an hour since he left us. What a night!"

"Et, quelle aventure!" exclaimed Celestine, anew.

None knew better than Lady Hester the significant depreciation of the French woman's phrase, and how differently had she rated all the hazards of the enterprise if any compromise of character were to have followed it. However, it was no time for discussion, and she let it pass.

"If he should have missed the way, and not be able to find us!" said she, after another pause.

"We shall be found dead in the morning," cried Celestine; "et, pour quelle aventure! Mon dieu, pour quelle aventure!"

The possibility that her fears suggested, and the increasing severity of

the storm—for now the thunder rolled over head, and the very ground seemed to shake with the reverberation—served to alarm Lady Hester, and for the first time she became frightened at their situation.

"We could scarcely find our way back, Celestine!" said she, rather in the tone of one asking for comfort than putting a question.

"Impossible, mi ladi."

"And Gregoire says that these houses are all uninhabited."

"Quelle aventure!" sobbed the maid.

"What can have become of him? It is more than an hour now! What was that, Celestine?—was it lightning?—there, don't you see it yonder towards the end of the street. I declare it is Gregoire, I see the lantern."

A cry of joy burst from both together, for already hope had begun to wane, and a crowd of fearful anticipations had taken its place.

Lady Hester tried to call his name, but the clattering noise of the storm drowned the weak effort. The light, however, came nearer at each instant, and there was no longer any doubt of their rescue, when suddenly it turned and disappeared at an angle of the street. Lady Hester uttered a piercing cry, and at the instant the lantern was again seen, showing that the bearer had heard the sounds.

"Here, Gregoire, we are here!" exclaimed she, in her loudest voice, and speaking in English.

Whoever carried the lantern seemed for a moment uncertain how to act, for there was no reply, nor any change of position for a few seconds, when at length the light was seen approaching where Lady Hester stood.

"I think I heard an English voice," said one, whose accents proclaimed her to be a woman.

"Oh, yes!" cried Lady Hester, passionately, "I am English. We have lost our way. Our courier went back to the inn for a lantern, and has never returned, and we are almost dead with cold and terror. Can you guide us to the Hotel de Russie?"

"The house I live in is only a few yards off. It is better you should take shelter there for the present."

"Take care, mi ladi!" whispered Celestine, eagerly. "This may be a plot to rob and murder us."

"Have no fears on that score, mademoiselle," said the unknown, laughing and speaking in French; "we are not very rich, but as surely we are perfectly safe company."

Few as these words were, there was in their utterance that indescribable tone of good breeding and ease which at once reassured Lady Hester, who now replied to her unseen acquaintance with the observance

due to an equal, and willingly accepted the arm she offered for guidance and support.

"At the end of this little street, scarcely two minutes walking, and you will be there," said the unknown.

Lady Hester scarcely heard the remark, as she ran on with voluble levity on the dangers they had run—the terrific storm—the desertion of the courier—her own fortitude—her maid's cowardice—what must have happened if they had not been discovered? till at last she bethought her of asking by what singular accident the other should have been abroad in such a terrible night.

"A neighbour and a friend of ours is very ill, madam, and I have been to the doctor's to fetch some medicine for him."

"And I, too, was bent upon a charitable errand," said Lady Hester, quite pleased with the opportunity of parading her own merits; "to visit a poor creature who was accidentally wounded this morning."

"It is Hans Roëckle, our poor neighbour, you mean," cried the other, eagerly; "and here we are at his house." And so saying, she pushed open a door, to which a bell, attached on the inside, gave speedy warning of their approach.

"Dearest Kate!" cried a voice from within, "how uneasy I have been at your absence!" And at the same moment a young girl appeared with a light, which, as she shaded with her hand, left her unaware of the presence of strangers.

"Think rather of this lady, and what *she* must have suffered," said Kate, as, drawing courteously back, she presented her sister to Lady Hester.

"Or rather, what I might have suffered," interposed Lady Hester, "but for the fortunate accident of your coming. A few moments back, as I stood shivering beneath the storm, I little thought that I should owe my rescue to a countrywoman. May I learn the name of one to whom I am so deeply indebted?"

"Dalton, Madam," said Nelly; and then, with a slight confusion, added, "We ought, perhaps, to tell you the circumstances which induced my sister to be abroad at such an hour."

"She knows it all," broke in Kate, "and can the more readily forgive it, as it was her own errand. But will not this lady come near the fire?" said she, addressing Mademoiselle Celestine, who, as she followed the rest into the humble chamber, was bestowing a most depreciatory glance upon the place, the furniture, and the people.

"It is only my maid," said Lady Hester, carelessly; "and now it is time I should introduce myself, and say that Lady Hester Onslow owes you all her gratitude." Ellen curtsied respectfully at the announcement,

but Kate Dalton's cheek coloured slightly, and she bent a look of more than common admiration at the handsome figure of the stranger. An innate reverence for rank and title was rooted in her heart, and she was overjoyed to think that their chance acquaintance should be one of that class so distinctively marked out for honour. Prepared to admire every grace and fascination of the high born, Kate watched, with eager and delighted looks, the slightest gestures, the least traits of manner of the fashionable beauty. They were all attractions to which her heart gave a ready response. The accent in which she spoke, the careless elegance of her attitude as she lay back in her chair, the charming negligence with which she wore the little portions of dress exchanged for her own, were all inimitable graces in the eyes of the simple girl.

As for Lady Hester, accustomed to all the servile offices of her own attendants, to be punctiliously obeyed and waited on, it was yet a new sensation to watch the zealous and eager devotion with which the two sisters ministered to her wants. In utter forgetfulness of themselves, they had brought forth the little resources of their humble wardrobe; too happy, as it seemed, when they saw their services so willingly accepted. Fortunately, they did not perceive the contemptuous looks with which "Mademoiselle" regarded their attentions, nor overhear her exclamation of "Mon Dieu! where did they gather together these 'chiffons?'" as she surveyed the somewhat antiquated stores of their toilette.

Even had Lady Hester's good breeding not prompted a gracious reception of what was so generously offered, the very singularity of the scene would have had its charm in her estimation. She was delighted with everything, even to Kate Dalton's slippers, which, by a most happy flattery, were a little too large for her. She fancied, too, that her costume, curiously made up of shreds and patches the most incongruous, was the dress of an Irish peasant! and was in an ecstasy at the thought of a similar one at her next fancy ball! Besides all these internal sources of self-satisfaction, the admiration of the two sisters was another and more legitimate cause of pleasure; for even Ellen, with all her natural reserve and caution, was scarcely less impressed than Kate with the charm of those fascinations which, however destined but for one class of society, are equally successful in all.

Ellen Dalton's life had not been devoid of trials, nor had they failed to teach their own peculiar lessons; and yet her experiences had not shown her how very like right feeling good breeding can be, and how closely good manners may simulate every trait of a high and generous nature.

CHAPTER IX.

A FINE LADY'S BLANDISHMENTS.

We left Lady Hester, in our last chapter, employed in the exercise of those fascinations which, however unlike in other respects, have this resemblance to virtue, that they are assuredly their own reward. The charm of courtesy never conferred one half the pleasure on those for whom it was exercised as to him who wielded it. It matters little whether the magician be prince or "charlatan," the art of pleasing is one of the most agreeable faculties human nature can be endowed with. Whether Lady Hester was aware of the theory or not, she felt the fact, as she saw the undisguised admiration in the faces of the two sisters; for while she had won over Nelly by the elevation of her sentiments and the kindliness of her expressions, Kate was fascinated by her beauty, her grace, her easy gaiety, and a certain voluble lightness that simulates frankness.

Without anything that approached the prying of curiosity, for she was both too well bred and too little interested to have so felt such a motive, she inquired by what accident the Daltons remained at Baden so late in the season, affected to see some similarity between their cases and her own, asked in the most feeling terms for their father, whose ill health she deplored, and then, took such an interest in "dear Frank," that Kate could not resist showing a portrait of him, which, however humble its claims to art, still conveyed a not unfaithful resemblance of the handsome youth.

While thus hearing about *them*, she was equally communicative about *herself*, and enlisted all the sympathies of the girls as she recounted their escape from the torrent in the Black Forest, and their subsequent refuge in Baden. Thence she diverged to Sir Stafford's illness, her own life of seclusion and sadness, and, by an easy transition, came round to poor Hans Roëckle and the accident of that morning.

"Do tell me everything about the poor dear thing," said she, pouting-ly. "They say it is mad."

"No, Madam," said Nelly, gravely; "Hans, with many eccentricities of manner, is very far from deficient in good sense or judgment, and is more than ordinarily endowed with right feeling and kindness of heart."

"He is a dwarf, surely."

"Yes, but in intelligence——"

"Oh that, of course," interrupted she; "they are rarely deficient in acuteness, but so spiteful, so full of malice. My dear child, there's no trusting them. They never forget an injury, nor even an imaginary slight. There was that creature—what was his name?—that Polish thing, Benywowski, I think; you remember, they baked him in a pie, to amuse Charles the Second—well, he never forgave it afterwards, and to the day of his death could never bear the sight of pastry."

"I must except poor Hans from this category," said Nelly, mildly, and with difficulty restraining a smile. "He is amiability itself."

Lady Hester shook her head doubtfully, and went on.

"Their very caprices, my dear, lead them into all kind of extravagances. For instance, this poor thing, it would seem, is so enamoured of these wooden toys that he makes himself, that he cannot bear to part with them. Now, there's no saying to what excesses he might be carried by this absurd passion. I have read of the most atrocious murders committed under a similar fanaticism."

"I assure you, Madam, there need be no fear of such, in the present instance. In the first case, Hans is too good; in the second, the objects are too valueless."

"Very true, so they are; but he doesn't think them so, you know."

"Nay, my lady; nor would you either, were you to regard them with attention," broke in Kate, whose cheek was now one glow of scarlet. "Even this, half finished as it is, may lay claim to merit." And as she spoke, she removed a napkin from a little statue, before which she held the candle.

"For shame, Kate, dearest Kate!" cried Nelly, starting up in bashful discomfiture.

"It is a statuette of poor Frank, Madam," continued Kate, who, totally regardless of her sister's interruption, now exhibited the figure nearer. "You see him just as he left us, his knapsack on his shoulder, his sword fastened across it, his little cap on one side of his head, and that happy smile upon his lips. Poor dear fellow! how sad a heart it covered!"

"And was this *his* work?" asked Lady Hester, in astonishment.

"No, Madam; my sister Nelly was the artist of this as of all the others. Unaided and untaught, her own ingenuity alone suggesting the means, as her imagination supplied the conception——"

"Kate! dear, dear Kate!" said Ellen, with a voice of almost rebuke. "You forget how unworthy these poor efforts are of such high-sounding epithets." Then, turning to Lady Hester, she continued, "Were it to

ears less charitable than yours, Madam, these foolish words were spoken, I should fear the criticism our presumption would seem to call forth. But you will not think harshly of us for ignorance."

"But this figure is admirable; the attitude is graceful; the character of the head, the features, are in good keeping. I know, of course, nothing of the resemblance to your brother, but, as a work of art, I am competent to say it has high merit. Do tell me how the thought of doing these things first occurred to you."

"I learned drawing as a child, Madam, and was always fond of it," said Ellen, with a degree of constraint that seemed as if the question were painful to answer.

"Yes, and so have I spent months—ay, I believe I might say years—at the easel, copying every Giorgione at Venice and every Vandyk at Genoa, and yet such a thought never suggested itself to *me*."

"I am happy to think so, Madam," was the low response.

"Why so? how do you mean?" asked Lady Hester, eagerly.

"That the motive in my case never could have been yours, Madam."

"And what was the motive?"

"Poverty, Madam. The word is not a pleasant word to syllable, but it is even better than any attempt at disguise. These trifles, while beguiling many a dreary hour, have helped us through a season of more than usual difficulty."

"Yes, Madam," broke in Kate. "You are aware that Papa's property is in Ireland, and for some years back it has been totally unproductive?"

"How very sad—how dreadful," exclaimed Lady Hester. But whether the expressions referred to the condition of the Daltons, or of Ireland, it is not quite clear.

"I doubt, Madam, if I should have ventured on the confession," said Ellen, with a voice of calm firmness, "were it not for the opportunity it offers of bearing testimony to the kindness of our poor friend yonder, Hans Roëckle. These efforts of mine have met such favour in his eyes that he accepts them all, taking them as rapidly as they are finished, and, I need not say, treating me with a generosity that would become a more exalted patron and a better artist."

"It is quite a romance, I declare," cried Lady Hester. "The Wood Demon and the Maiden. Only he is not in love with you, I hope?"

"I'm not quite so sure of that," said Kate, laughing; "at least, when some rivalry of her own wooden images does not intervene."

"Hush! Hans is awaking," said Ellen, as on tiptoe she crossed the room noiselessly, and opened the door of the chamber where the Dwarf lay. Lady Hester and Kate now drew near and peeped in. On a low

"He is a dwarf, surely."

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"Oh that, of course," interrupted sh[illegible] acuteness, but so spiteful, so full of [illegible] trusting them. They never forge[illegible] slight. There was that creature [illegible] thing, Benywowski, I think; yo[illegible] amuse Charles the Second— the day of his death could n[illegible]

"I must except poor Li[illegible] and with difficulty restra[illegible]

Lady Hester shook [illegible]

"Their very capa[illegible] gances. For inst[illegible] of these wood[illegible] with them. [illegible] carried by [illegible] murder[illegible]

"I [illegible] tormenting fancies. After a second or two, he inst[illegible] Nuremberg, in the Oden Gasse, it happened. The [illegible] stabbed her as she knelt at the cross; and the Dwarf, [illegible] they called him, tore off his turban to bind up the [illegible] was his reward, maiden—tell me that! Are ye all so [illegible] dare not speak it?"

[illegible] not, Hans—we never heard of the Ritter nor the [illegible]

[illegible] you, then. They burned him as a warlock in the Hohen [illegible] morning." With a burst of wild and savage laughter he [illegible] speech, which he spoke in good German; but immediately [illegible] thoughts seemed to turn to his old Tyrol haunts and the fami- [illegible] language of his native land, as he sung, in a low voice, the following [illegible]

A Buchsel zu schiessen,
A stossring zu schlagn,
A Dienal zu Liebn,
Muss a Bue hahn.

"What does that mean?—do tell me," said Lady Hester, whose interest in the scene was more that of curiosity than compassion.

"It is a peasant dialect; but means, that a rifle to shoot with, a weapon to wield, and a maiden to love, are all that a good Tyroler needs in life," said Kate, while Nelly busied herself in arranging the position of the wounded limb—little offices for which the poor Dwarf looked his gratitude silently.

[illegible]aged with tarnished [illegible] his wounded arm sup- [illegible]stened with the bright [illegible]urning, as his lips moved [illegible]ntinued, regardless of the [illegible]ed-side.

[illegible]mplain of pain?" asked Lady [illegible]lly; "for ever since his acciden[illegible] [illegible]he patois of the Bregenzer Wald [illegible] still he will reply to me in good [illegible]en stooping down, she asked—"Are [illegible] her face without speaking, it seemed as [illegible] wandering faculties, but yet not awakened [illegible]" said she, gently, as she lifted a cup of water [illegible]eedily, and then passed his hand across his brow, [illegible]e tormenting fancies. After a second or two, he [illegible] Nuremberg, in the Oden Gasse, it happened. The [illegible] stabbed her as she knelt at the cross; and the Dwarf, [illegible] they called him, tore off his turban to bind up the [illegible] was his reward, maiden—tell me that! Are ye all so [illegible] dare not speak it?"

settle—over which an old scarlet saddle-cloth, fringed with tarnished lace, was spread as a quilt—lay Hans Roëckle, his wounded arm supported by a pillow at his side—his dark eyes glistened with the bright glare of fever, and his cheeks were flushed and burning, as his lips moved unceasingly, with a low muttering, which he continued, regardless of the presence of those who now approached his bed-side.

"What is it he is saying?—does he complain of pain?" asked Lady Hester.

"I cannot understand him," said Nelly; "for ever since his accident he has spoken in his native dialect—the patois of the Bregenzer Wald—of which I am utterly ignorant; still he will reply to me in good German when questioned." Then stooping down, she asked—"Are you better, Hans?"

Hans looked up steadfastly in her face without speaking, it seemed as if her voice had arrested his wandering faculties, but yet not awakened any intelligence.

"You are thirsty, Hans," said she, gently, as she lifted a cup of water to his lips. He drank greedily, and then passed his hand across his brow, as if trying to dispel some tormenting fancies. After a second or two, he said, "It was in Nuremberg, in the Oden Gasse, it happened. The Ritter von Ottocar stabbed her as she knelt at the cross; and the Dwarf, Der Mohrchen, as they called him, tore off his turban to bind up the wound; and what was his reward, maiden—tell me that! Are ye all so shamed that ye dare not speak it?"

"We know it not, Hans—we never heard of the Ritter nor the Mohrchen before."

"I'll tell you, then. They burned him as a warlock in the Hohen Platz next morning." With a burst of wild and savage laughter he closed this speech, which he spoke in good German; but immediately after his thoughts seemed to turn to his old Tyrol haunts and the familiar language of his native land, as he sung, in a low voice, the following words:—

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A stossring zu schlagn,
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"How wild his looks are," said Lady Hester. "See how his eyes glance along the walls, as if some objects were moving before them." And so in reality was it. Hanserl's looks were riveted upon the strange and incongruous assemblage of toys which, either suspended from nails or ranged on shelves, decorated the sides of the chamber. "Ay," said he at last, with a melancholy smile, "thou'lt have to put off all this bravery soon, my pretty damsels, and don the black veil and the hood, for thy master Hans is dying!"

"He is talking to the wax-figures," whispered Kate.

"And ye too, my brave hussars, and ye Uhlaners with your floating banners, must lower your lances as ye march in the funeral procession, when Hanserl is dead! Take down the wine-bush from the door, hostess, and kneel reverently, for the bell is ringing; and here comes the priest in his alp, and with the pix before him. Hush! they are chanting his requiem. Ah! yes. Hanserl is away to the far-off land.

Wo sind die Täge lang genug,
Wo sind die Nächte mild."

"Come away, we do but excite his mind to wanderings," said Ellen; "so long as there is light to see these toys, his fancy endows them all with life and feeling, and his poor brain is never at rest." The sound of voices in the outer room at the same moment caught their attention, and they heard the Courier of Lady Hester in deep converse with Mademoiselle Célestine. He, deploring the two hours he had passed in hunting after his mistress through the dark streets of the village; and she, not less eloquently, bewailing the misery of a night spent in that comfortless cabin. To visit a wretched Dwarf, too! Parbleu! had it been a rendezvous with some one worth while, but an excursion without an object, "sans émotion même;" it is too bad.

"Que voulez-vous!" said Monsieur Grégoire, with a shrug of the shoulders; "she is English!"

"Ah! that is no reason for a vulgar caprice, and I, for one, will not endure it longer. I cannot do so. Such things compromise oneself. I'll give warning to-morrow. What would my poor dear mistress, la Marquise, say if she only knew how 'mes petits talents' were employed."

"Do not be rash, Mademoiselle," interposed the Courier; "they are rich, very rich, and we are going to Italy too, the real 'Pays de Cocagne' of our profession."

How far his persuasions might have gone in inducing her to reconsider her determination there is no saying, when they were suddenly interrupted by Lady Hester's appearance.

Her first care was to ascertain that her absence from the hotel had not been remarked—her secret, as she loved to fancy it, remained sacred. Having learned thus much, she listened with a kind of childish pleasure to the Courier's version of all his unhappy wanderings in search of her, until he at last descried a light, the only one that shone from any window in the whole village.

As Grégoire had provided himself with a sufficient number of shawls, cloaks, and clogs, and, as the storm had now passed over, Lady Hester prepared to take her leave, delighted with her whole night's adventure. There had been excitement enough to make it all she could desire; nor did she well know whether most to admire her heroism during the storm, or the success with which she captivated the two sisters; the courage which planned the expedition, or the grace with which it was executed.

"You'll come and see me, Miss Dalton; mind, I'm always at home. Remember, Miss Kate Dalton, that they must not deny me to *you*," said she, in her most winning of manners. The two girls gave their promise in bashful diffidence, while she continued—

"You'll say to your Papa, too, that Sir Stafford will wait on him whenever he is able to leave the house. Mr. Onslow, indeed, ought to call at once; but he is so odd. Never mind, we shall be great friends; and you'll bring all your little carving tools and your models with you, and work in my room. Your sister her embroidery, or her lace, or her 'crochet,' or whatever it is, or you'll read German for me—like a dear child, that will be so delightful. I can't understand a word of it, but it sounds so soft, and you'll tell me all it's about—won't you? And then this poor thing must want for nothing."

"Nay, Madam, he is in no need of anything but kindness. In a land where such simple habits prevail, Hans Roëckle passes for rich."

"How strange! how very odd; but I remember that poor Prince of Stolzenheimer. Papa used to say that he had six cordons, but only one coat! I believe it was true."

"Hanserl is better off, Madam," replied Nelly, smiling; "at least as regards the coats."

"Tell him, then, that I've been to see him, and am so grieved at his accident, but that it was all Colonel Haggerstone's fault—a bit of silly vanity to show how well he could shoot—and I'm certain it just comes of being used to the pistols. I never missed when I fired with Norwoods!"

The utterance of that name seemed to recal her from the discursive babble. She paused, and for a moment or two she was silent. At last, turning to the sisters, she reiterated her hopes of a speedy meeting, and, with a cordial pressure of the hand to each, wished her last good night, and departed.

CHAPTER X.

A FAMILY DISCUSSION.

LONG before Lady Hester awoke on the following morning every circumstance of her visit was known to Grounsell. It was the Doctor's custom to see Dalton early each day, and before Sir Stafford was stirring, and to chat away an hour or so with the invalid, telling the current news of the time, and cheering his spirits by those little devices which are not among the worst resources of the Materia Medica. With all his knowledge of Lady Hester's character—her caprices, her whims, and her insatiable passion for excitement, he was still astonished beyond measure at this step: not that the false air of benevolence or charity deceived him—he was too old a practitioner in medicine, and had seen far too much of the dark side of human nature to be easily gulled—but his surprise arose from the novelty of her condescending to know, and even propitiate the good graces of people, whom she usually professed to regard as the least interesting of all classes of mankind. The "reduced lady or gentleman" had only presented themselves to Lady Hester's mind by the medium of an occasional curiously worded advertisement in a morning paper, and were invariably associated with a subsequent police report, where the object of charity was sure to be confronted with half-a-dozen peers or members of parliament, whose sympathies he had put under contribution, to support a life of infamy or extravagance. "A begging impostor" rang in her mind as a phrase whose ingredient words could not be divorced, and she was thoroughly convinced that imposture and poverty were convertible terms. The very notion of any one having once been well off, and being now in embarrassment, was, to her deeming, most satisfactory evidence of past misconduct and present knavery. Grounsell had heard her hold forth on this theme more than once, "embroidering the sentiment" with an occasional sly allusion to himself and his own fortunes, so that he had often thought over the difficulty of serving the Daltons with Sir Stafford, by reflecting on the hostility any project would meet with from "my Lady," and now accident, or something very like it, had done what all his ingenuity could not succeed in discovering.

The announcement at first rendered him perfectly mute, he heard it without power to make the slightest observation; and it was only at the end of a lengthy description from the two sisters, that he exclaimed, in a kind of half soliloquy, "By Jove, it is so like her, after all!"

"I'm sure of it," said Nelly; "her manner was kindness and gentleness itself. You should have seen the tender way she took poor Han-

serl's hand in her own, and how eagerly she asked us to translate for her the few stray words he uttered."

"Of course she did. I could swear to it all, now that my eyes are opened?"

"And with what winning grace she spoke," cried Kate. "How the least phrase came from her lips with a fascination that still haunts me."

"Just so, just so!" muttered Grounsell.

"How such traits of benevolence ennoble high station," said Nelly.

"How easy to credit all that one hears of the charms of intercourse, where manner like hers prevails on every side," cried Kate, enthusiastically.

"How thoughtful in all her kindness!"

"What elegance in every movement!"

"With what inborn courtesy she accepted the little valueless attentions, which were all we could render her."

"How beautiful she looked, in all the disorder of a dress, so unlike her own splendour. I could almost fancy that old straw chair to be a handsome fauteuil since she sat in it."

"How delightful it must be to be admitted to the freedom of daily intercourse with such a person—to live within the atmosphere of such goodness, and such refinement;" and thus they went on ringing the changes upon every gift and grace, from the genial warmth of her heart, to the snowy whiteness of her dimpled hands; while Grounsell fidgeted in his chair—searched for his handkerchief—his spectacles—his snuff-box, dropped them all in turn, and gathered them up again, in a perfect fever of embarrassment and indecision.

"And you see her every day, Doctor?" said Nelly.

"Yes, every day, Madam," said he, hastily; and not noticing nor thinking to whom he was replying.

"And is she always as charming, always as fascinating?"

"Pretty much the same, I think," said he, with a grunt.

"How delightful; and always in the same buoyancy of spirits?"

"Very little changed in that respect," said he, with another grunt.

"We have often felt for poor Sir Stafford being taken ill away from his home, and obliged to put up with the miserable resources of a watering place in winter; but, I own, when I think of the companionship of Lady Hester, much of my compassion vanishes."

"He needs it all, then," said Grounsell, as, thrusting his hands into the recesses of his pockets, he sat a perfect picture of struggling embarrassment.

"Are his sufferings so very great?"

Grounsell nodded abruptly, for now he was debating within himself what course to take, for while, on one side, he deemed it a point of

honour not to divulge to strangers, as were the Daltons, any of the domestic circumstances of those with whom he lived, he felt, on the other, reluctant to suffer Lady Hester's blandishments to pass for qualities more sterling and praiseworthy.

"She asked the girls to go and see her," said Dalton, now breaking silence for the first time; for although flattered in the main by what he heard of the fine lady's manner towards his daughters, he was not without misgivings that what they interpreted as courtesy might just as probably be called condescension, against which his Irish pride of birth and blood most sturdily rebelled. "She asked them to go and see her, and it was running in my head if she might not have heard something of the family connexion."

"Possibly!" asserted Grounsell, too deep in his own calculations to waste a thought on such a speculation.

"My wife's uncle, Joe Godfrey, married an Englishwoman. The sister was aunt to some rich city banker; and indeed, to tell the truth, his friends in Ireland never thought much of the connexion—but you see times are changed. *They* are up now, and *we* are down—the way of the world! It's little I ever thought of claiming relationship with the like o' them!"

"But if it's they, who seek us, Papa?" whispered Kate.

"Ay, that alters the case, my dear; not but I'd as soon excuse the politeness. Here we are, living in a small way; 'till matters come round in Ireland, we can't entertain them—not even give them a dinner party."

"Oh, dearest Papa," broke in Nelly; "is not our poverty a blessing if it save us the humiliation of being absurd! Why should we think of such a thing? Why should we, with our straitened means and the habits narrow fortune teaches, presume even to a momentary equality with those so much above us."

"Faith, it's true enough!" cried Dalton, his cheek flushed with anger. "We *are* changed, there's no doubt of it; or it is not a Dalton would say the words you've just said. I never knew before, that the best in the land wasn't proud to come under our roof."

"When we had a roof," said Nelly, firmly. "And if these ancestors had possessed a true and a higher pride, mayhap we might still have one. Had they felt shame to participate in schemes of extravagance and costly display—had they withheld encouragement from a ruinous mode of living, we might still be dwellers in our own home and our own country."

Dalton seemed thunderstruck at the boldness of a speech so unlike the gentle character of her who had uttered it. To have attributed any portion of the family calamities to their own misconduct—to have laid the blame of their downfal to any score save that of English legislation, acts of parliament, grand jury laws, failure of the potato crop, tithes, Terry alts, or smut in the wheat—was a heresy he never, in his gloomiest

moments, had imagined, and now he was to hear it from the lips of his own child.

"Nelly—Nelly Dalton," said he; "but why do I call you Dalton? Have you a drop of our blood in your veins at all—or is it the Godfreys you take after? Extravagance—ruinous living—waste—what'll you say next?" He could'nt continue, indignation and anger seemed almost to suffocate him.

"Papa—dearest, kindest papa!" cried Nelly, as the tears burst from her eyes, "be not angry with me, nor suppose that any ungenerous repining against our altered lot finds a place in my heart. God knows that I grieve not for myself; in the humble sphere in which I am placed, I have found true contentment—greater, perhaps, than higher fortunes would have given me; for here, my duties are better defined, and my sense of them is clearer. If I feel sorrow, it is for you and my dear sister; for you, Papa, who suffer from many a privation, for her, who might well adorn a more exalted station. But for me—the lame Nelly as children used to call me—" She was not suffered to finish her speech, for already her father had clasped his arms around her, and Kate, in a gush of tears, was sobbing on his shoulder."

"Where's the Doctor—what's become of him?" said Dalton, as, recovering from his emotion, he wished to give a different direction to their thoughts.

"He went away half an hour ago, Papa," said Kate. "He always goes off without saying good-bye, whenever there is a word said about family."

"I noticed that, too, my dear," said Dalton, "and I wouldn't wonder if he came of low people; not but he's a kind creature, and mighty good-hearted."

Nelly could probably have suggested a better reason for the Doctor's conduct, but she prudently forbore from again alluding to a theme already too painful.

With the reader's permission, we will now follow him, as, with a gesture of impatience, he abruptly left the room, on the very first mention by Dalton of that genealogical tree, in whose branches he loved to perch himself.

"An old fool," muttered Grounsell, as he passed down stairs; "an old fool that no experience will ever make wiser! Well may his native country be a stumbling-block to legislators, if his countrymen be all like him, with his family pride and pretension! Confound him, can't he see that there's no independence for a man in debt, and no true self-respect left for him who can't pay his tailor. For himself there's no help; but the poor girls! he'll be the ruin of *them*. Kate is already a willing listener to his nonsensical diatribes about blood and family; and poor

had been struggling on, in debt and difficulty, for
creditors by the plausible plea that a conside-
fall in to him. It is quite certain that he
maintained a course of expenditure that,
operty, it would have been impossible
mony, too, was a constant source of
lid, that a considerable sum in
his bequest. To find him-
, was then to know that

spected the case had
yourself—bore all
of honour, than
s of imputing to
frey for above forty
act, of having prejudiced
his angry epistles from a park
re a seal of armorial pretensions,
ge. All these signs seemed to me
ing, that I set my friend down for a
assuredly never imagined that poverty
the injury."
e all that," said Grounsell. "At this very moment,
him on every side, he'd rather talk of his former style
barbarous place, I never can remember the name of it
listen to any suggestion for the future benefit of his

have been a grievous enemy to him," said Sir Stafford, musingly.

"He reckons the cost at something like six thousand a year," said Grounsell.

"Not the half of it, Doctor. The estate, when I succeeded to it, was in a ruinous condition. A pauper and rebellious tenantry holding their tenures on nominal rents, and either living in open defiance of all law, or scheming to evade it by a hundred subterfuges. Matters are somewhat better; but if so, it has cost me largely to make them so. Disabuse his mind, I beg you, of this error. His loss was at least not so heavy as he reckoned."

"Faith, I'll scarcely venture on so very delicate a theme," said Grounsell, dryly. "I'm not quite so sure how he'd take it."

"I see, Doctor," said Onslow, laughing, "that his duelling tastes have impressed you with a proper degree of respect. Well, let us think of something more to the purpose than rectifying a mere mistaken opinion. How can we serve him? What can be done for him?"

graces associated with the vanities of fashion? Will all Kate's dutiful affection exalt those household drudgeries in her esteem, the performances of which will henceforth serve to separate her more and more from one her imagination has already enshrined as an idol."

"You take the matter too seriously to heart, Grounsell," said Sir Stafford, smiling.

"Not a bit of it; I've studied symptoms too long and too carefully not to be ever on the look-out for results. To Lady Hester, this visit is a little episode as easily forgotten as any chance incident of the journey. But what an event is it in the simple story of *their* lives!"

"Well, well, it cannot be helped now; the thing is done, and there's an end of it," said Sir Stafford, pettishly; "and I confess I cannot see the matter as you do, for I have been thinking for two days back about these Daltons, and of some mode of being of service to them, and this very accident may suggest the way. I have been looking over some old letters and papers, and I've no doubt that I have had—unintentionally, of course—a share in the poor fellow's ruin. Do you know, Grounsell, that this is the very same Peter Dalton who once wrote to me the most insulting letters, and even a defiance to fight a duel, because a distant relative bequeathed to me a certain estate, that more naturally should have descended to him. At first, I treated the epistles as unworthy of any serious attention—they were scarcely intelligible, and not distinguished by anything like a show of reason; but when from insult the writer proceeded to menace, I mentioned the affair to my lawyer, and, indeed, gave him permission to take any steps that might be necessary to rid me of so unpleasant a correspondent. I never heard more of the matter; but now, on looking over some papers, I see that the case went hardly with Dalton, for there was a "rule to show cause," and an "attachment," and I don't know what besides, obtained against him from the King's Bench, and he was actually imprisoned eight months for this very business, so that, besides having succeeded to this poor fellow's property, I have also deprived him of his liberty. Quite enough of hardship to have suffered at the hands of any one man,—and that one, not an enemy."

"And would you believe it, Onslow, we have talked over you and your affairs a hundred times together, and yet he has never even alluded to this? One would think that such an event would make an impression upon most men; but, assuredly, he is either the most forgetful or the most generous fellow on earth."

"How very strange! And so you tell me that he remembers my name, and all the circumstances of that singular bequest—for singular it was—from a man whom I never saw since he was a boy."

"He remembers it all. It was the last blow fortune dealt him, and, indeed, he seemed scarcely to require so [illegible] a stroke to fell him, for,

one capital affords; who could not credit the fact, that people could ride, dress, dine, and drive anywhere else—was lamentably "ill bestowed" among the hills and valleys, the winding glens and dense pine forests of a little corner of Germany.

If he liked the excitement of hard exercise, it was when the pleasure was combined with somewhat of peril, as in a fox-hunt, or heightened by the animation of a contest, in a rowing match. Scenery, too, he cared for, when it came among the incidents of a deer-stalking day, in the Highlands. Even walking, if it were a match against time, was positively not distasteful; but to ride, walk, row or exert himself, for the mere exercise, was in his philosophy only a degree better than a sentence to the treadmill. The slavery being voluntary, not serving to exalt the motive.

To a mind thus constituted, the delay at Baden was intolerable. Lady Hester's system of small irritations and provocations rendered domesticity and home life out of the question. She was never much given to reading at any time, and now books were not to be had; Sydney was so taken up with studying German, that she was quite uncompanionable. Her father was too weak to bear much conversation; and as for Grounsell, George always set him down for a quiz: good-hearted in his way, but a bit of a bore, and too fond of old stories. Had he been a young lady, in such a predicament, he would have kept a journal, a petty martyrology of himself and his feelings, and eked out his sorrows between Childe Harold and Werther. Had he been an elderly one, he would have written folios by the post, and covered acres of canvas with dogs in worsted, and tigers in Berlin wool. Alas! he had no such resources. Education had supplied him with but one comfort and consolation—a cigar, and so he smoked away, incessantly—sometimes as he lounged out of the window, after breakfast, in all the glory of an embroidered velvet cap, and a gorgeous dressing-gown, sometimes as he sauntered in the empty saloon, or the deserted corridors, in the weed-grown garden, in the dishabille of a many-pocketed shooting-jacket, and cork-soled shoes. Now, as he lounged along the dreary streets, or paced along the little wooden bridge, wondering within himself how much longer a man could resist the temptation that suggested a spring over the balustrade into the dark pool beneath.

"He had come abroad partly for Sydney's sake, partly because, having "gone somewhat too fast" in town, an absence had become advisable. But now, as he sauntered about the deserted streets of the little village, not knowing how long the durance might last; without an occupation; without a resource; both his brotherly love and prudence began to fail him, and he wished he had remained behind, and taken the chances, whatever they might be, of his creditors' forbearance. His monied embarrassments involved nothing dishonourable; he had done no more than

"Ruined gentlemen, like second-hand uniforms, are generally sent to the colonies," said Grounsell; "but Dalton is scarcely fit for export."

"What if we could get him appointed a magistrate in one of the West India Islands?"

"New rum would finish him the first rainy season."

"Is he fit for a consulship?"

"About as much as for lord chancellor. I tell you the man's pride would revolt at anything to which a duty was annexed. Whatever you decide on must be untramelled by any condition of this kind."

"An annuity, then; some moderate sum sufficient to support them in respectability," said Onslow; "that is the only thing I see for it, and I am quite ready to do my part, which, indeed, is full as much a matter of honour as generosity."

"How will you induce him to accept it?"

"We can manage that, I fancy, with a little contrivance. I'll consult Prichard; he is coming here this very day about those renewals, and he'll find a way of doing it."

"You'll have need of great caution," said Grounsell; "without being naturally suspicious, misfortune has rendered him very sensitive as to anything like a slight. To this hour he is ignorant that his daughter sells those little figures; and although he sees, in a hundred appliances to his comfort, signs of resources of which he knows nothing, he never troubles his head how the money comes."

"What a strange character."

"Strange, indeed. True pride and false pride, manly patience, childish petulence, generosity, selfishness, liberality, meanness, even to the spirits alternating between boy-like levity and downright despair! the whole is such a mixture as I never saw before, and yet I can fancy it is as much the national temperament as that of the individual."

And now Grounsell, launched upon a sea without compass or chart, hurried off to lose himself in vague speculation, about questions that have puzzled, and are puzzling, wiser heads than his.

CHAPTER XI.

"A PEEP BETWEEN THE SHUTTERS," AT A NEW CHARACTER.

Not even Mademoiselle Célestine herself, nor the two London footmen, now condemned to exhibit their splendid proportions to the untutored gaze of German rustics, could have chafed and fretted under the unhappy detention at Baden, with a greater impatience, than did George Onslow. A young Guardsman, who often fancied that London, out of season, was a species of Palmyra; who lived but for the life that o

Ancient geographers have decided, we are not aware on what grounds, that there is a place between "H—ll and Connaught." Modern discovery, with more certitude, has shown one between the Guards and the Line. A species of military purgatory, where, after a due expiation of offences, the sinner may return to the Paradiso of the Household Brigade without ever transgressing the Inferno of a marching regiment. This half-way stage is the "Rifles." So long as a young fashionable falls no lower, he is safe. There is no impugnment of character—no injury that cannot be repaired. Now, George Onslow had reached so far. He was compelled to exchange into the —th, then quartered in Ireland. It is true he did not join his regiment; his father had interest enough somewhere to obtain a leave of absence for his son, and first Lieutenant Onslow, vice Ridgeway promoted, was suffered to amuse himself howsoever and wheresoever he pleased.

The "exchange," and the reasons for which it was effected, were both unpleasant subjects of reflection to George; and as he had few others, these continued to haunt him, till at last he fancied that every one was full of the circumstance, each muttering as he passed, "That's Onslow, that was in the Coldstreams." Lady Hester, indeed, did not always leave the matter purely imaginary, but threw out occasional hints about soldiers who never served, except at St. James's or Windsor, and who were kept for the wonderment and admiration of foreign sovereigns when visiting England—just as Suffolk breeders exhibit a "punch"—or a Berkshire farmer will show a hog, for the delectation of swine fanciers. Where children show toys, kings show soldiers, and ours are considered very creditable productions of the kind; but Lady Hester averred, with more of truth than she believed, that a man of spirit would prefer a somewhat different career. These currents, coming as they did in season and out of season, did not add to the inducements for keeping the house, and so George usually left home each day, and rarely returned to it before nightfall.

It is true he might have associated with Haggerstone, who, on being introduced, made the most courteous advances to his intimacy; but George Onslow was bred in a school whose first lesson is a sensitive shrinking from acquaintance, and whose chief characteristic is distrust. Now he either had heard, or fancied he had heard, something about Haggerstone. "The Colonel wasn't all right," some how or other. There was a story about him, or somebody of his set, and, in fact, it was as well to be cautious; and so the young Guardsman, who would have ventured his neck in a steeple-chase, or his fortune on a "Derby," exhibited all the deliberative wisdom of a judge as to the formation of a passing acquaintance.

If we have been somewhat prolix in explaining the reasons of the

what some score of very well-principled young [illegible] veyed,
are doing at this very hour,—ay, good reader, a[illegible] of his
you and I have gone where all our moralizing w[illegible] ople
—he had contracted debts, the payment of [illegible] int-
others,—he had borrowed, what no efforts o[illegible] it
had gambled, and lost sums totally dispro[illegible]
in all these things, he was still within [illegible]
—at least, so said the code under w[illegible]
lieved it.

Sir Stafford, who only learned a[illegible]
was thunderstruck at the amoun[illegible]
ago, that he had paid all Georg[illegible] toxi-
and now he saw all the old ite[illegible] and have
only one beaten road to ruin[illegible] Onslow formed
at "the Bench." The very [illegible] more in himself,
same. It was Lazarus L[illegible]
another patriarch, called [illegible] nt reveries, the past did
lucky viscount had onc[illegible] statements from Mr. Orson,
biter had not broken [illegible] has his lawyer now-a-days—
and so the same resu[illegible] affairs, being the chief intelligence
market-men call [illegible] time, a short and pithy epistle from a
pounds. [illegible] Norwood, who, although having won very

Nothing is [illegible] ever seemed in such pressing difficulty as since
genuity with [illegible]
making dist[illegible] epistolary was neither so marked by originality,
to appreciate [illegible] that it would be worth communicating; but
defined, but [illegible] bears slightly upon the interests of our story, we are
and [illegible] and being, like all his correspondence, very brief, we
dealer [illegible] *in extenso.*

"[illegible] again!" said Onslow, as he looked at the seal, and read
hi[illegible] able autograph in the corner. "My noble friend does
[illegible] long respite;" and biting his lip in some impatience, he
[illegible] paper, and read:

DEAR ONSLOW,

[illegible] has paid me the two thousand, as you ordered, but positively
[illegible] seventeen hundred and eighty, the Ascot affair, because I
[illegible] give up the original two bills for twelve hundred passed to me
[illegible] debt. I told him that they were thrown into the fire, being
[illegible] tempted to illustrate the process with himself, six months ago.
[illegible] gave the renewals; but all won't do, the old prig persists in
[illegible] and, to comply with which is clearly impossible, for I have not
[illegible] preserved the precious ashes of the incremation. I don't doubt,

'v speaking, and in pettifogging parlance, he is all correct—
of honour, such strictness is downright absurdity—and
something more.' Now, my dear boy, you must
ice, too—for I'm in a bad book about 'Chanti-
ns—after all—and say that he is acting in
s—as of course he is—that the money
g. The delay has already put me to
w you will be provoked at his ob-
at Brentwood is going to marry
nd pounds, which is exactly what
s he ought to 'run away from her—
weight:' which is somewhat of my own
has to do with a wife, now-a-days, with the
nd a dark horse first favourite for the Oaks, is
. Doncaster has levanted, and the Red House folk
; he would back Hayes' lot, and there's nothing can
right again. By the way, Orson hints that if I give him a
r something of that sort, with respect to the bills, he'd pay the
—but this is only a dodge, to make a case for lawyers' parchments,
amps, and so forth; so I won't stand it. Your writing to him will do
the whole thing at once. What a jolly world it would be, old fellow, if
the whole race of Orsons were carried off by the Cholera, or anything
akin. They are the greatest enemies to human peace in existence.

"Believe me, yours, most faithfully,

"NORWOOD.

"P.S.—I half fancy Baden is empty by this; but if you chance upon a little fellow—heaven knows to whom he belongs, or whence he comes—called Albert Jekyl, will you tell him that I'll forward the twenty pounds whenever I win the Oaks, or marry Miss Home Greville, or any other similar piece of good fortune. When he lent me the cash, I don't believe he was the owner of as much more in the world; but it suited him to have a viscount in his debt—a devilish bad investment if he knew but all. The chances therefore are that he has foundered long ago, and you will be spared the trouble of the explanation; but if he survive, say something apologetic, for letter-writing and foreign postage are only making bad worse."

Although, unquestionably, the postscript of this elegant epistle was the part which reflected most severely upon the writer's good feeling and sense of honour, George Onslow was more struck by what related to his own affairs, nor was it till after the lapse of some days that he took the trouble of considering the paragraph, or learning the name of the indi-

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Mr. Alfred Jekyl at supper.

a curious contrast with the miserable meal before him. Helping himself to a small portion of cheese, and filling out a goblet of that element which neither cheers nor inebriates, he proceeded to eat his supper. Onslow looked on with a mingled sense of wonder and ridicule, and while half-disposed to laugh at the disparity of the entertainment and him who partook of it, there was something in the scene which repressed his scorn and rendered him even an interested spectator of what went forward. The piercing cold of the night at length admonished him that he should provide for his own admission into the hotel; and although nothing was now easier than to make his presence known, yet he felt a natural reluctance at the pain he must occasion to the stranger, whose frugal mode of living and humble interior would be thus so unceremoniously exposed. The chances are, thought George, that these privations are only endurable because they are practised in secret, and at no sacrifice of worldly estimation. How can I then—or what right have I—to inflict the torture of an exposure upon this young man, whoever he is? The conclusion was very rapidly come to, and not less speedily acted upon; for he determined to spend the night, if need be, in the open air, rather than accept an alternative so painful in its consequences. His resolutions had usually not long to await their accomplishment; and, turning his back to the window, and disdaining the slow process by which he had gained the ascent, he sprang with one leap down to the ground: in doing so, however, his elbow struck the window; and at the same instant that he reached the earth the shivered fragments of a pane of glass came clattering after him. In a moment the sash was thrown open and a head appeared above. "I have smashed the window," cried George, in French, as the only means of being heard. "They have locked me out of the hotel, and I don't fancy spending a winter's night in walking the streets of Baden."

"You're an Englishman?" said the voice from above, in English.

"Yes;" "but I don't see what that has to do with the matter," replied Onslow, testily; "even a Laplander might prefer shelter in such a season."

"If you'll have the goodness to come round to the front door," said the voice—one of the very softest and meekest of voices—"I shall have great pleasure in opening it for you." And at the same time the unknown held forth his candle in polite guidance to the other's steps.

"Thanks, thanks; never mind the light. I know the way perfectly," said George, not a little ashamed at the contrast between his own gruffness and the courtesy of the stranger whose window he had broken.

Onslow had barely time to reach the front door of the inn, when it was opened for him, and he saw before him a very dapper little figure, who, with a profusion of regrets at not having heard him before, offered his candle, a wax one on this occasion, for George's accommodation. Protesting that the broken pane was not of the slightest inconvenience—

that the room was a small dressing closet—that it was not worth a moment's thought and so forth, he permitted Onslow to escort him to the door of his room, and then wished him a good night. The scene scarcely occupied the time we have taken to relate it, and yet in that very short space George Onslow had opportunity to see that the unknown had all the easy deportment and quiet breeding of one accustomed to good society. There was, perhaps, a little excess of courtesy, at least according to that school of politeness in which Onslow had been taught; but this might be the effect of living abroad, where such a tone usually prevailed. The urbanity was not exactly cold enough for George's notions. No matter, "he's no snob, that's clear, thought he, and even if we were, he's done me good service;" and with this blending of selfishness and speculation he went to sleep, and slept soundly, too, not harassed by even a thought of him, who passed an hour in the effort to repair his broken window, and shivered the rest of the night through from the insufficiency of his skill.

Blessed immunity theirs, who so easily forget the pain they occasion others, and who deem all things trifles that cost themselves no afterthought of regret. Happy the nature that can without self-repining spill the wine over Aunt Betty's, one, "peach-coloured satin," or in careless mood pluck the solitary flower of her only geranium. Enviable stoicism that mislays the keepsake of some poor widow, or lames the old curate's cob, the fond companion of many rambles. These, whatever others think, are very enviable traits, and enable the possessors to wear placid countenances, and talk in most meritorious strain on the blessings of equanimity and the excellent fruits of a well-trained mind.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. ALBERT JEKYL.

ONSLOW'S first thought, on awaking the next morning, was of last night's acquaintance, but all the information he could obtain concerning him, was that he was an Englishman who had passed the summer in Baden, and during the season knew and was known by every one. The waiter called him, in the usual formulary, "a very nice gentleman;" and seemed by his manner to infer that any further account might be had by —paying for it. Onslow, if he even understood the hint, was not the man to avail himself of it, so he simply ordered him to bring the hotel book, in which the names of all travellers are inscribed, and at once discovered that the proprietor of the humble "*entresol*," No. 6, was a Mr. Albert Jekyl, with the ordinary qualification attached to him of "Rentier

Anglais." Searching back in the same instructive volume, he found that on his arrival in June, Mr. Jekyl had occupied a small apartment on the first floor, from which he had subsequently removed to the second; thence to a single room in the third story, and finally settled down in the quiet seclusion of the small chamber where George had first seen him. These were very small materials from which to compile a history, but at least they conveyed one inference, and that a very common one—that the height of Mr. Jekyl's fortune and that of his dwelling observed to each other an inverse proportion, and that as his *means* went down, *he* went up. If, then, no very valuable contribution to the gentleman's history was contained here, at least the page recorded his name; and George, re-opening Norwood's letter, satisfied himself that this was the same confiding individual who had entrusted the noble viscount with a loan of twenty pounds. George now remembered to have seen his card on Lady Hester's table, with inquiry after Sir Stafford. "Poor fellow!" thought he; "another victim of 'trente-et-un.' They have cleared him out at the tables, and he is either ashamed to write home, or his friends have refused to assist him. And Norwood, too,—the heartlessness of putting to contribution a poor young fellow like this!" Onslow thought worse of this than of fifty other sharp things of the noble lord's doing, and of some of which he had been himself the victim.

"I'll call upon him this very morning!" said George, half aloud, and with the tone and air of a man who feels he has said a very generous thing, and expressed a sentiment that he is well aware will expose him to a certain amount of reprobation. "Jekyl, after all, is a right good name. Lady Hester said something about Jekyls that she knew, or was related to. Good style of fellow—he looked a little Tigerish, but that comes of the Continent. If he be really presentable, too, my Lady will be glad to receive him in her present state of destitution. Norwood's ungracious message was a bore to be sure, but then he need not deliver it—there was no necessity of taking trouble to be disagreeable—or better again—far better," thought he, and he burst out laughing at the happy notion, "I'll misunderstand his meaning, and pay the money. An excellent thought; for as I am about to book up a heavy sum to his Lordship, its only deducting twenty pounds and handing it to Jekyl, and I'll be sworn he wants it most of us all."

The more Onslow reflected on it the more delighted was he with this admirable device; and it is but fair to add, that however gratified at the opportunity of doing a kindness, he was even better pleased at the thought of how their acquaintance at the "Grosvenor" and the "Ultras" would laugh at the "sharp viscount's being sold." There was only one man of all Onslow's set on whom he would have liked to practise this jest, and that man was Norwood. Having decided upon his plan, he

next thought of the execution of it, and this he determined should be by letter. A short note, conveying Norwood's message and the twenty pounds, would save all explanation, and spare Jekyl any unpleasant feeling the discussion of a private circumstance might occasion.

Onslow's note concluded with his "thanks for Mr. Jekyl's kindness on the preceding evening," and expressing a wish to know, "at what hour Mr. J. would receive a visit from him."

Within a very few minutes after the billet was despatched, a servant announced Mr. Albert Jekyl, and that young gentleman, in the glory of a very magnificent brocade dressing-gown, and a Greek cap, with slippers of black velvet, embroidered in gold, entered the room.

Onslow, himself a distinguished member of that modern school of dandyism whose pride lies in studs and shirt-pins, in watch-chains, rings, and jewelled canes, was struck by the costly elegance of his visitor's toilet. The opal buttons at his wrists; the single diamond, of great size and brilliancy, on his finger—even the massive amber mouthpiece of the splendid meerschaum he carried in his hand, were all evidences of the most expensive tastes. "Could this by possibility be the man he had seen at supper?" was the question he at once asked himself; but there was no time to discuss the point, as Jekyl, in a voice almost girlish in its softness, said—

"I could not help coming at once to thank you, Mr. Onslow, for your polite note, and say how gratified I feel at making your acquaintance. Maynard often spoke of you to me; and I confess I was twenty times a day tempted to introduce myself."

"Maynard—Sir Horace Maynard!" cried Onslow, with a slight flush —half pleasure, half surprise; for the baronet was the leader of the set George belonged to—a man of great fortune, ancient family, the most successful on the English turf, and the envy of every young fellow about town. "Do you know Maynard?"

"Oh, very well indeed," lisped Jekyl; "and like him much."

Onslow could not help a stare at the man who, with perfect coolness and such an air of patronage, professed his opinion of the most distinguished fashionable of the day.

"He has a very pretty taste in equipage," continued Jekyl; "but never could attain to the slightest knowledge of a dinner."

Onslow was thunderstruck. Maynard, whose entertainments were the triumph of the Clarendon, thus criticised by the man he had seen supping like a mouse on a morsel of mouldy cheese!

"Talking of dinners, by the way," said Jekyl, "what became of Merewater?"

"Lord Merewater?—he was in waiting when we left England."

"A very tidy cook he used to have—a Spaniard called José—a perfect

hand at all the Provençal dishes. Good creature, Merewater. Don't you think so?"

Onslow muttered a kind of half-assent; and added, "I don't know him." Indeed, the lord in question was reputed as insufferably proud, and as rarely admitting a commoner to the honour of his acquaintance.

"Poor Merewater! I remember playing him such a trick: to this hour he does not know who did it. I stole the 'menu' of one of his grand dinners, and gave it to old Lord Bristock's cook—a creature that might have made the messes for an emigrant ship—and such a travestie of an entertainment never was seen. Merewater affected illness, and went away from the table firmly persuaded that the whole was got up to affront him."

"I thought the Earl of Bristock lived well and handsomely," said George.

"Down at Brentwood it was very well—one was in the country—and grouse and woodcocks, and salmon and pheasants, came all naturally and seasonably; besides, he really had some very remarkable Burgundy; and, though few people will drink it now-a-days, Chambertin *is* a Christmas wine."

The cheese and the decanter of water were uppermost in George's mind, but he said nothing, suffering his companion to run on, which he did, over a wide expanse of titled and distinguished families, with all of whom he appeared to have lived on the closest terms of intimacy. Certainly of those Onslow himself knew Jekyl related twenty little traits and tokens that showed he was speaking with true knowledge of the parties. Unlike Haggerstone, he rarely, if ever, alluded to any of those darker topics which form the staple of scandal. A very gentle ridicule of some slight eccentricity, a passing quiz of some peculiarity in dress, voice, or manner, was about the extent of Jekyl's criticism, which on no occasion betrayed any malice. Even the oddities that he portrayed were usually done by some passing bit of mimicry of the individual in question. These he threw into the dialogue of his story, without halt or impediment, and which being done with great tact, great command of face, and a most thorough appreciation of humour, were very amusing little talents, and contributed largely to his social success. Onslow laughed heartily at many of the imitations, and thus recognised characters that were introduced into a narrative, without the trouble of announcing them.

"You've heard, perhaps, the series of mishaps which compelled us to take refuge here," said George, leading the way to what he supposed would induce an equal degree of communicativeness on the other side.

"Oh! yes, the landlord told me of your disasters."

"After all, I believe the very worst of them was coming to this place in such a season."

"It is certainly seeing it '*en papillote*,'" said Jekyl, smiling, "and you perhaps are not an admirer of beauty unadorned."

"Say, rather, of nature at her ugliest—for whatever it may be in summer, with foliage, and clear streams, flowers, smart folk airing and driving about, equipage, music, movement, and merry voices—now, it is really too dismal. Pray, how do you get through the day?"

Jekyl smiled one of his quiet, equivocal smiles, and slightly raised his shoulders without speaking.

"Do you shoot?"

"No," said he.

"But why do I ask—there's nothing to shoot. You ride then."

"No."

"Cigars will do a great deal; but confound it, there must be a large share of the day very heavy on your hands, even with a reasonable allowance for reading and writing."

"Seldom do either!" said Jekyl, with his usual, imperturbed manner.

"You havn't surely got up a flirtation with some '*fräulein* with yellow hair'?"

"I cannot lay claim to such good fortune. I really do nothing. I have not even the usual English resource of a terrier to jump over my stick, nor was I early enough initiated into the mystery of brandy and water—in fact, a less occupied individual cannot well be imagined; but somehow—you'll smile if I say—I am not bored."

"It would be very ungenerous, then, to conceal your secret," cried Onslow; "for assuredly, the art of killing time here, without killing oneself, is worth knowing."

"The misfortune is, I cannot communicate it; that is, even giving me credit for possessing one, my skill is like that of some great medical practitioner, who has learnt to look on disease with such practised eyes, that the appropriate remedy rises as it were instinctively to his mind,—he knows not how or why,—and who dies, without being able to transmit the knowledge to a successor. I have, somewhat in the same way, become an accomplished idler; and with such success, that the dreariest day of rain that ever darkened the dirty windows of a village inn, the most scorching dog-day that ever emptied the streets of an Italian city, and sent all the inhabitants to their siesta, never hipped me. I have spent a month with perfect satisfaction in quarantine, and bobbed for three weeks in a calm at sea, with no other inconvenience than the moans of my fellow-passengers. There's no secret in it, Mr. Onslow; or, if there be, it lies in this pretty discovery, that we are always bored by our habit of throwing ourselves on the resources of somebody else, who, in his turn, looks out for another, and so on. Now, a man in a fever never dreams of cooling his hand by laying it on another patient's cheek; yet this is

what we do. To be thoroughly bored, you must associate yourself with some half-dozen tired, weary, dyspeptic twaddles, and make up a joint-stock bank of your several incapacities, learn to growl in chorus, and you'll be able to go home and practise it, as a solo."

"And have you been completely alone here, of late?" said George, who began to feel that the sermon on "ennui" was not unacoompanied by a taste of the evil.

"Occasionally I've chatted for half an hour with two gentlemen, who reside here—a Colonel Haggerstone——"

"By the way, who is he?" broke in Onslow, eagerly.

"He has been traced back to Madras, but the most searching inquiries have failed to elicit anything further."

"Is he the man they called Arlington's Colonel Haggerstone?"

Jekyl nodded; but with an air that seemed to say, he would not enter more deeply into the subject.

"And your other companion—who is he?"

"Peter Dalton, of—I am ashamed to say—I forget where," said Jekyl; who, at once assuming Dalton's bloated look, in a well-feigned Irish accent, went on: "a descendant of as ancient and as honourable a familee as any in the three kingdoms, and if a little down in the world—bad luck to them that done it!—just as ready as ever he was, to enjoy agreeable society and the ganial flow of soul."

"He's the better of the two, I take it," said Onslow.

"More interesting, certainly—just as a ruined chateau is a more picturesque object than a new police-station, or a cut-stone penitentiary. There's another feature also which ought to give him the preference. I have seen two very pretty faces from time to time as I have passed the windows, and which I conjecture to belong to his daughters."

"Have you not made their acquaintance?" asked Onslow, in some surprise.

"I grieve to say I have not," sighed Jekyl, softly.

"Why the matter should not be very difficult, one might opine, in such a place, at such a time, and with——"

He hesitated, and Jekyl added—

"With such a Papa, you were about to say. Well, that is precisely the difficulty. Had my excellent friend, Peter, been a native of any other country, I flatter myself I should have known how to make my advances; but with these dear Irish their very accessibility is a difficulty of no common order. Assume an air of deference and respect, and they'll set you down for a cold formalist, with whom they can have nothing in common. Try the opposite line, and affect the free-and-easy, and the chances are that you have a duel to fight before you know you have offended. I confess that I have made several small advances,

and thrown out repeated little hints about loneliness, and long evenings, and so forth; and although he has concurred with me in every word, yet his practice has never followed his precept. But I don't despair. What say you, if we attack the fortress as allies? I have a notion we should succeed."

"With all my heart. What's your plan?"

"At this moment I have formed none, nor is there need of any. Let us go out, like the knight-errants of old, in search of adventures, and see if they will not befall us. The first step will be to make Dalton's acquaintance. Now, he always takes his walk in bad weather in the great Saal below; should he not make his appearance there to-day, as he has already absented himself for some days, I'll call to inquire after him at his own house. You'll accompany me. The rest we'll leave to fortune."

Although Onslow could not see that this step could lead to anything beyond a civil reply to a civil demand, he assented readily, and promised to meet his companion at four o'clock the same evening. As for Jekyl, he took a very different view of the whole transaction, for he knew that while to him there might be considerable difficulty in establishing any footing with the Daltons, the son of the wealthy Baronet would be, in all likelihood, very differently looked on. In presenting *him*, thought he, I shall have become the friend of the family at once. It had often before been his fortune in life to have made valuable acquaintances in this manner; and although the poor Daltons were very unlikely to figure in the category of profitable friends, they would at least afford an agreeable resource against the dulness of wintry evenings, and prevent, what he himself called, the "demoralisation" of absence from female society. Lastly, the scheme promised to establish a close intimacy between Onslow and himself; and here was a benefit worth all the others.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUSPICIOUS VISITOR.

How far were the Daltons from suspecting that they were the subject of so much and such varied solicitude, and that, while Lady Hester was fancying to herself all the fashionable beauties whom Kate would eclipse in loveliness, and what an effect charms like hers would produce on society, Sir Stafford was busily concerting with his lawyer the means of effectually benefiting them; and George Onslow—for want of better—speculated, as he smoked, on "the kind of people" they would prove, and wondered whether the scheme were worth the light trouble it was to cost him. Little did they know of all this—little imagine that out-

side of their humble roof there lived one—save "dear Frank"—whose thoughts included them. "The purple and fine linen" category of this world cannot appreciate the force of this want of sympathy! They, whose slightest griefs and least afflictions in life are always certain of the consolations of friends, and the even more bland solace of a fashionable physician—whose woes are re-echoed by the *Morning Post*, and whose sorrows are mourned in *Court Journals*, cannot frame to themselves the sense of isolation which narrow fortune impresses. "Poverty," says a classical authority, "has no heavier evil than that it makes men ridiculous." But this wound to self-love, deep and poignant though it be, is light in comparison with the crushing sense of isolation—that abstraction from sympathy in which poor men live!

The Daltons were seated around Hanserl's bed, silently ministering to the sick man, and watching with deep and anxious interest the laboured respiration and convulsive twitches of his fever. The wild and rapid utterance of his lips, and the strange fancies they syllabled, often exciting him to laughter, only deepened the gravity of their countenances, and cast over the glances they interchanged a tinge of sadder meaning.

"He couldn't have better luck," muttered Dalton, sorrowfully; "just from being a friend to us! If he had never seen nor heard of us, maybe 'tis happy and healthy he'd be to-day!"

"Nay, nay! Papa," said Nelly, gently; "this is to speak too gloomily; nor is it good for us to throw on fortune the burden that we each should bear patiently."

"Don't tell me there is not such a thing as luck!" replied Dalton, in a tone of irritation. "I know well whether there is or no! For five-and-thirty years, whatever I put my hand to in life turned out badly! It was the same whether I did anything on the spur of the moment, or thought over it for weeks. If I wished a thing, that was reason enough for it to come out wrong!"

"And even were it all as you fancy, Papa, dearest," said Nelly, as she fondly drew her arm round him, "is it nothing, that these reverses have found you strong of heart, and high of courage, to bear them? Over and over again have you told me, that the great charm of field sports lay in the sense of fatigue bravely endured, and peril boldly confronted, that, devoid of these, they were unworthy of men. Is there not a greater glory, then, in stemming the tide of adverse fortune; and is it not a higher victory that carries you triumphant over the real trials of life—kind of heart, trustful, and generous, as in the best days of your prosperity, and with a more gentle and forbearing spirit than prosperity ever taught."

"That's nothing against what I was saying," said Dalton, but with a more subdued face. "There's poor little Hans, and till a couple of

days ago he never knew what it was to be unlucky. As he told us himself, his life was a fairy tale."

"True," interposed Nelly; "and happy as it was, and blameless, and guileless, he who led it, mark how many a gloomy thought—what dark distressing fancies hover round his brain, and shadow his sick bed! No, no! the sorrows of this world are more equally distributed than we think for, and he who seems to have fewest is oftentimes but he who best conceals them!"

Her voice shook, and became weaker as she spoke; and the last few words were barely audible. Dalton did not notice her emotion; but Kate's looks were bent upon her with an expression of fond and affectionate meaning.

"There's somebody at the door," whispered Dalton; "see who it is, Kate."

Kate arose, and, opening the door softly, beheld old Andy; his shrivelled features and lustreless eyes appearing in a state of unusual excitement.

"What's the matter, Andy?—what is it you want?" said she.

"Is the master here?—where's the master?"

"He's here; what do you want with him?" rejoined she.

"I want himself," said he, as with his palsied hand he motioned to Dalton to come out.

"What is it, you old fool?" said Dalton, impatiently, as he arose and followed him outside of the room.

"There's one of them again!" said Andy, putting his mouth to Dalton's ear, and whispering in deep confidence.

"One of what?—one of whom?"

"He's up-stairs," muttered Andy.

"Who's up-stairs?—who is he?" cried Dalton, angrily.

"Didn't I know him the minit I seen him! Ayeh! Ould as I am, my eyes isn't that dim yet."

"God give me patience with you!" said Dalton; and, to judge from his face, he was not entreating a vain blessing. "Tell me, I say, what do you mean, or who is it is up-stairs?"

Andy put his lips once more to the other's ear, and whispered, "an attorney!"

"An attorney!" echoed Dalton.

"Iss!" said Andy, with a significant nod.

"And how do you know he's an attorney?"

"I seen him!" replied the other, with a grin; "and I locked the door on him."

"What for?"

"What for!—what for, is it? Oh! murther, murther!" whined

the old creature, who in this unhappy question thought he read the evidence of his poor master's wreck of intellect. It was indeed no slight shock to him to hear that Peter Dalton had grown callous to danger, and could listen to the terrible word he had uttered without a sign of emotion.

"I seen the papers with a red string round 'em," said Andy, as though by this incidental trait he might be able to realise all the menaced danger.

"Sirrah, ye're an old fool!" said Dalton, angrily, and, jerking the key from his trembling fingers, he pushed past him, and ascended the stairs.

If Dalton's impatience had been excited by the old man's absurd terrors and foolish warnings, his own heart was not devoid of a certain vague dread, as he slowly wended his way upwards. It was true he did not partake of old Andy's fear of the dread official of the law. Andy, who forgetting time and place, not knowing that they were in another land, where the King's writ never ran, saw in the terrible apparition the shadows of coming misfortune. Every calamity of his master's house had been heralded by such a visit, and he could as soon have disconnected the banshee with a sudden death, as the sight of an attorney with an approaching disaster.

It is true, Dalton did not go this far; but still old impressions were not so easily effaced. And as the liberated captive is said to tremble at the clanking of a chain, so his heart responded to the fear that memory called up of past troubles and misfortunes.

"What can he want with me, now?" muttered he, as he stopped to take breath. "They've left me nothing but life; and they can't take *that*. It's not that I'd care a great deal if they did! Maybe, it's more bother about them titles; but I'll not trouble my head about them. I sold the land, and I spent the money; ay, and what's more, I spent it at home among my own people, like a gentleman! and if I'm an absentee, it's not my fault. I suppose he couldn't arrest me!" said he, after a pause. "But, God knows! they're making new laws every day, and it's hard to say, if they'll let a man have peace or ease in any quarter of the world before long. Well, well! there's no use guessing. I have nothing to sell—nothing to lose; I suppose they don't make it hanging matter, even for an Irishman, to live a trifle too fast." And with this piece of re-assuring comfort, he pulled up his cravat, threw back the breast of his coat, and prepared to confront the enemy bravely.

Although Dalton made some noise in unlocking the door, and not less in crossing the little passage that led to the sitting-room, his entrance was unperceived by the stranger, who was busily engaged in examining a half-finished group by Nelly. It represented an old soldier, whose eyes were covered by a bandage, seated beside a well, while a

days ago he never knew what it was to be victory. She himself, his life was a fairy tale."

"True," interposed Nelly; "and happy forth all her guileless, he who led it, mark how many a lind veteran distressing fancies hover round his brain nk in the No, no! the sorrows of this world are the boy. think for, and he who seems to have wing the best conceals them!"

was certainly not

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"There's somebody at the d Kate."

d Dalton, whose pride in his worthy feeling—shame, that a shrivelled features and lust cupation. citement. highly prized and praised, and

"What's the matter.

"Is the master her kind," observed Dalton, interrupting

"He's here; what ng your name, and the object of this

"I want himself Dalton to come ou irm of Prichard and Harding, solicitors,

"What is it, yo the other, whose voice and manner at once followed him ou

"There's on before," said Dalton, motioning to a chair. ton's ear, and self, and, placing a large roll of papers before

"One of w ed to untie and arrange them most methodically.

"He's u too deeply impressed with the importance of

"Wh thought upon the astonishment of a bystander.

"Did Harding are mighty cool kind of gentlemen," thought my ey as seat at the opposite side of the table, trying, but able success, to look as much at ease as his visitor. his f draft of instructions—bill of sale of stock—no, d s what we want," muttered Prichard half aloud. "I Sir, is in your handwriting?"

his spectacles and looked at the document for a few his countenance gradually appeared to light up joyful meaning, for his eye glistened, and a red check.

every word of it; and what's more, I'm as day, as the hour I wrote it."

Mr. Nickleby, scarcely noticing the reply, was again deep in his re- the object of them must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EMBARRASSING QUESTION.

It is that a man looks at a letter he has written
once before, and peruses it with any degree of satis-
ever how pleasurable the theme, or how full of interest
years have made such changes in circumstances, have so
relations with the world—dispelled illusions here, created new
there—that the chances are he can feel nothing but astonish-
what once were his opinions, and a strange sense of misgiving
ever could have so expressed himself.

Rare as this pleasure is, we left Mr. Dalton in the fullest enjoyment of it, in our last chapter, and, as he read and re-read his autograph, every feature of his face showed the enjoyment it yielded him.

"My own writing, sure enough! I wish I never put my hand to paper in a worse cause! Isn't it strange, he muttered, how a man's heart will outlive his fingers? I couldn't write now as well as I used then, but I can feel just the same. There's the very words I said." And with this he read, half aloud, from the paper—"'But if you'll consent to send lawyers and attorneys to the devil, and let the matter be settled between us, like two gentlemen, Peter Dalton will meet you, when, where, and how you like, and take the satisfaction as a full release of every claim and demand he makes on you.' Just so! and a fairer offer never was made, but I grieve to say it wasn't met in the same spirit."

"When you wrote that letter, Mr. Dalton," said Prichard, not looking up from the papers before him, "you were doubtless suffering under the impression of a wrong, at the hands of Sir Stafford Onslow."

"Faith, I believe you. The loss of a fine estate wasn't a trifle, whatever you may think it!"

"The question ought rather to be, what right had you to attribute that loss to *him*."

"What right, is it? All the right in the world. Who got the property? Answer me that. Wasn't it he came in as a sole legatee? But what am I talking about? Sure the thing is done and ended, and what more does he want?"

"I'm just coming to that very point, Sir," said Prichard. "Sir Stafford's attention having been accidentally called to this transaction, he perceives that he has unwittingly done you a great injustice, and that

little drummer-boy read to him the bulletin of [illegible]
had destined the work for a present to Frank, a[illegible]
genius in its composition. The glowing enthu[illegible]
—his half-opened lips—his attitude of eage[illegible]
words, were finely contrasted with the chil[illegible]
more intent as it seemed in spelling out [illegible]
signification.

If the stranger was not a finished [illegible] his
ignorant of art, and was deep in [illegible]
accosted him. [illegible] at the

"I beg pardon—Mr. Dalton, I [illegible]
sition has made me forget myself, [illegible]
a native artist?" [illegible] light."

"It was done in this place, S[illegible] [illegible]ined Dalton, laugh-
daughter's skill was overlayed b[illegible] [illegible]re just as guilty here as
Dalton should condescend to su[illegible] [illegible]ney. But, sure, we can
"I have seen very inferior p[illegible] [illegible] Barbaria there, over the
if I am not indiscreet——"

"To prevent any risk of [illegible]her.
him, "I'll take the liberty [illegible] be over the frontier in two
visit."

"Prichard, Sir; of t[illegible] [illegible]re," said he, rubbing his hands
Lincoln's Inn-fields," [illegible] all arranged here, and without
assumed a business-lik[illegible]

"I never heard the [illegible] of moving since my knee was bad,
The stranger seated [illegible]
him on the table, pro[illegible] [illegible]scale meeting, Sir, if I understand you
and with the air of [illegible] but, if you had been kind enough to
his occupation to [illegible] nothing was further from my friend's

"Prichard an[illegible]
Dalton, as he to[illegible] [illegible]alton, as he sank down into a chair.
not with any re[illegible] such intention."

"Copy of [illegible]
here it is! [illegible]
believe that [illegible] satisfaction! I'll take my oath you said

Dalton [illegible]
seconds, [illegible] the word may bear a peaceful significa-
with [illegible]
flush [illegible] Dalton, as clasping his hands on his
[illegible] of disappointed hope, and totally inattentive
read[illegible] that Prichard was pouring forth. "You
[illegible] the latter, triumphantly, "that if my
s[illegible]

friend's intentions are not precisely what you looked for, that they are not less inspired by an anxious desire to cultivate your friendship and obtain your good opinion."

"I wasn't listening to a word you were saying," said Dalton, with a sincerity that would have made many men smile; but Mr. Prichard never laughed, or only when the joke was uttered by a silk gown, or the initiative given by the bench itself.

"I was endeavouring, Sir, to convey," said he again, and with infinite patience, "that, by a clause of the late Mr. Godfrey's will, the suggestion was made to the effect that, if Sir Stafford Onslow should deem it fitting and suitable, the testator would not be averse to an annuity of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds per annum being settled on Mr. Peter Dalton for the term of his life. This clause has now been brought under Sir Stafford's notice for the first time, as he never, in fact, saw the will before. The document was lodged in our hands; and as certain proceedings, of which the letter you have just acknowledged forms a part, at that period placed you in a peculiar position of hostility to Sir Stafford, we, as his legal advisers, did not take any remarkable pains to impress this recommendation on his memory."

"Go on; I'm listening to you," said Dalton.

"Well, Sir, Sir Stafford is now desirous of complying with this injunction, the terms of which he reads as more obligatory upon him than his legal friends would be willing to substantiate. In fact, he makes the matter a question of feeling, and not of law; and this, of course, is a point wherein we have no right to interpose an opinion. Something like ten years have elapsed since Mr. Godfrey's death, and taking the sum at two hundred pounds, with interest at five per cent., a balance of above three thousand two hundred will now be at your disposal, together with the annuity on your life; and to arrange the payment of these moneys, and take measures for their future disbursement, I have the honour to present myself before you. As for these letters, they are your own; and Sir Stafford, in restoring them, desires to efface all memory of the transaction they referred to, and to assure you that, when circumstances enable him to meet you, it may be on terms of perfect cordiality and friendship."

"Upon my soul and conscience I don't understand a word of it at all!" said Dalton, whose bewildered looks gave a perfect concurrence to the speech. "Is it that I have a right to all the money?"

"Exactly, Sir; Sir Stafford feels that he is simply carrying out the wishes of your relative, Mr. Godfrey——"

"But this has nothing to do with the little difference between Sir Stafford and myself? I mean, it leaves us just where we were before."

"Sir Stafford hopes that henceforth a better understanding will subsist between you and himself; and that you, seeing how blameless he has been in the whole history of your losses, will receive this act as an evidence of his desire to cultivate your friendship."

"And this two hundred a year?"

"Is Mr. Godfrey's bequest."

"But depending on Sir Stafford to pay or not, as he likes."

"I have already told you, Sir, that he conceives he has no option in the matter; and that the mere expression of a desire on Mr. Godfrey's part becomes to him a direct injunction."

"Faith! he was mighty long in finding it out, then," said Dalton, laughing.

"I believe I have explained myself on that head," replied Prichard; "but I am quite ready to go over the matter again."

"God forbid! my head is 'moidered' enough already, not to make it worse! Explanations, as they call them, always puzzle me more; but if you'd go over the subject to my daughter Nelly, her brain is as clear as the Lord Chancellor's. I'll just call her up here, for, to tell you the truth, I never see my way right in anything till Nelly makes it out for me."

Mr. Prichard was probably not grieved at the prospect of a more intelligent listener, and readily assented to the proposition; in furtherance of which Dalton left the room to seek his daughter.

On descending to the little chamber where he had left the two girls, in waiting beside the Dwarf's sick-bed, he now discovered that they had gone, and that old Andy had replaced them; a change which, to judge from Hanserl's excited looks and wild utterance, was not by any means to his taste.

"Was machst du hier?" cried he, sternly, to the old man.

"Whisht! alannah! Take a sleep, acushla!" whined old Andy, as, under the delusion that it was beside an infant his watch was established, he tried to rock the settle-bed like a cradle, and then croned away in a cracked voice one of his own native ditties:—

"I saw a man weeping and makin' sad moan,
He was crying and grievin',
For he knew their deceivin',
An' rockin' a cradle for a child not his own."

"Was für katzen jammer! What for cats' music mak'st thou there?"

"Where's the girls, Andy?" whispered Dalton in the old man's ear.

"They're gone," muttered he.

"Gone where?—where did they go?"

"Fort mit ihm. Away with him. Leave him not stay. Mein head is heavy and mein brain turn round!" screamed Hanserl.

"Will ye tell me where they're gone, I say?" cried Dalton, angrily.

"Hushoo! husho!" sung out the old man, as he fancied he was composing his charge to sleep; and then made signs to Dalton to be still, and not awaken him.

With an angry muttering, Dalton turned away and left the chamber, totally regardless of Hanserl's entreaties to take Andy along with him.

"You're just good company for each other!" said he, sulkily, to himself. "But where's these girls, I wonder?"

"Oh, Papa, I have found you at last!" cried Kate, as, bounding down the stairs half-a-dozen steps at a time, she threw her arm round him. "She's here! she's up-stairs with us; and so delightful, and so kind, and so beautiful. I never believed any one could be so charming."

"And who is she, when she's at home?" said Dalton, half sulkily.

"Lady Hester, of course, Papa. She came while we were sitting with Hanserl—came quite alone to see him and us; and when she had talked to him for a while, so kindly and so sweetly, about his wound, and his fever, and his home in the Tyrol, and his mother, and everything, she turned to Nelly, and said, 'Now, my dears, for a little conversation with yourselves. Where shall we go to be quite alone and uninterrupted?' We didn't know what to say, Papa; for we knew that you and the strange gentleman were busy in the sitting-room, and while I was thinking what excuse to make, Nelly told her that our only room was occupied. 'Oh, I don't care for that in the least,' said she; 'let us shut ourselves up in your dressing-room.' Our dressing-room! I could have laughed and cried at the same moment as she said it; but Nelly said that we had none, and invited her up-stairs to her bedroom; and there she is now, Papa, sitting on the little bed, and making Nelly tell her everything about who we are, and whence we came, and how we chanced to be living here."

"I wonder Nelly hadn't more sense," said Dalton, angrily; "not as much as a curtain on the bed, nor a bit of carpet on the floor. What'll she think of us all!"

"Oh, Papa, you're quite mistaken; she called it a dear little snuggery; said she envied Nelly so much that lovely view over Eberstein and the Schloss, and said what would she not give to lead our happy and peaceful life, away from that great world she despises so heartily. How sad to think her duties tie her down to a servitude so distasteful and repulsive!"

"Isn't my lady the least taste in life of a humbug, Kitty?" whispered Dalton, as his eyes twinkled with malicious drollery.

"Papa, Papa! you cannot mean——"

"No harm, if she is, darling. I'm sure the pleasantest, ay, and some of the worthiest people ever I knew, were humbugs; that is, they were always doing their best to be agreeable to the company; and if they strained their consciences a bit, small blame to them for that same."

"Lady Hester is far above such arts, Papa; but you shall judge for yourself. Come in, now, for she is so anxious to know you."

Kate, as she spoke, had opened the door of the little bedroom, and drawing her arm within her father's gently led him forward, to where Lady Hester was seated upon the humble settle.

"It's a nice place they showed you into, my Lady," said Dalton, after the ceremony of introduction was gone through; "and there was the drawing-room, or the library, and the breakfast-parlour, all ready to receive you."

"We heard that you were engaged with a gentleman on business, Papa."

"Well, and if I was, Nelly, transacting a small matter about my estates in Ireland, sure it was in my own study we were."

"I must be permitted to say that I am very grateful for any accident which has given me the privilege of an intimate with my dear young friends," said Lady Hester in her very sweetest of manners; "and as to the dear little room itself, it is positively charming."

"I wish you'd seen Mount Dalton, my Lady. There's a window, and it isn't bigger than that there, and you can see seven baronies out of it and a part of three counties—Killikelly's flour-mills, and the town of Drumcoolaghan in the distance; not to speak of the Shannon winding for miles through as elegant a bog as ever you set eyes upon."

"Indeed!" smiled her Ladyship, with a glance of deep interest.

"'Tis truth I'm telling you, my Lady," continued he; "and, what's more, 'twas our own, every stick and stone of it. From Crishnamuck to Ballymodereena on one side, and from the chapel at Dooras down to Drumcoolaghan, 'twas the Dalton estate."

"What a princely territory!"

"And why not? Weren't they kings once, or the same as kings. Didn't my grandfather, Pearce, hold a court for life and death in his own parlour? Them was the happy, and the good times too," sighed he, plaintively.

"But I trust your late news from Ireland is favourable?"

"Ah! there isn't much to boast about. The old families is dying

out fast, and the properties changing hands. A set of English rogues and banker-fellows, that made their money in dirty lanes and alleys——"

A sort of imploring, beseeching anxiety from his daughter Kate here brought Dalton to a dead stop, and he pulled up as suddenly as if on the brink of a precipice.

"Pray, go on, Mr. Dalton," said Lady Hester, with a winning smile; "you cannot think how much you have interested me. You are aware that we really know nothing about poor dear Ireland; and I am so delighted to learn from one so competent to teach."

"I didn't mean any offence, my Lady," stammered out Dalton, in confusion. "There's good and bad everywhere; but I wish to the Lord the cotton-spinners wouldn't come among us, and their steam-engines, and their black chimneys, and their big factories; and they say we're not far from that now."

A gentle tap at the door, which communicated with the sitting-room, was heard at this moment, and Dalton exclaimed,

"Come in!" but, not suffering the interruption to stop the current of his discourse, he was about to resume, when Mr. Prichard's well-powdered head appeared at the door.

"I began to suspect you had forgotten me, Mr. Dalton," said he; but suddenly catching a glimpse of Lady Hester, he stopped to ask pardon for the intrusion.

"Faith, and I just did," said Dalton, laughing; "couldn't you contrive to step in, in the morning, and we'll talk that little matter over again."

"Yes, Prichard; pray don't interrupt us now," said Lady Hester, in a tone of half-peevishness. "I cannot possibly spare you, Mr. Dalton, at this moment;" and the man of law withdrew, with a most respectful obeisance.

"You'll forgive me, won't you?" said she, addressing Dalton, with a glance, whose blandishment had often succeeded in a more difficult case.

"And now, Papa, we'll adjourn to the drawing-room," said Kate, who somehow continued to notice a hundred deficiencies in the furniture of a little chamber she had often before deemed perfect.

Dalton accordingly offered his arm to Lady Hester, who accepted the courtesy in all form, and the little party moved into the sitting-room; Nelly following, with an expression of sadness in her pale features, very unlike the triumphant glances of her father and sister.

"I'm certain of *your* pardon, Mr. Dalton, and of *yours*, too, my dear child," said Lady Hester, turning towards Kate, as she seated herself on the stiff old sofa, "when I avow that I have come here determined to pass the evening with you. I'm not quite so sure that my dear Miss Dalton's forgiveness will be so readily accorded me. I see that she

"Isn't my lady the least taste in life of a humbug, Kitty?" whispered Dalton, as his eyes twinkled with malicious drollery.

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[illegible]

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"Faith, and I just did," said [illegible] to step in, in the morning, [illegible]."

"Yes, Prichard; pray [illegible]," said Lady Hester, in a tone of half-peevishness. "[illegible] Mr. [illegible] at this moment;" and the [illegible] obeisance.

"You'll forgive me, won't you?" said [illegible] with a glance, whose blandishment had often [illegible].

"And now, Papa, we'll adjourn to the [illegible]," said [illegible] somehow continued to notice a hundred deficiencies in the [illegible] of a little chamber she had often before deemed perfect.

Dalton accordingly offered his arm to Lady Hester, [illegible] courtesy in all form, and the little party moved into the [illegible], Nelly following, with an expression of [illegible] in her pale features, [illegible] unlike the [illegible] father and sister.

"I'm [illegible] of yours, [illegible], my dear child [illegible] self on [illegible] to pa[illegible]

D[illegible]

already looks gravely at the prospect of listening to my fiddle-faddle instead of following out her own charming fancies."

"Oh! how you wrong me, my Lady," broke in Nelly, eagerly. "If it were not for my fears of our unfitness—our inability," she stammered, in confusion and shame; and old Dalton broke in,

"Don't mind her, my Lady; we're as well used to company as any family in the country; but you see, we don't generally mix with the people one meets abroad; and why should we? God knows who they are. There was chaps here last summer at the tables you wouldn't let into the servants' hall. There was one I seen myself, with an elegant pair of horses, as nice steppers as ever you looked at, and a groom behind with a leather-strap round him, and a—"—here Mr. Dalton performed a pantomime, by extending the fingers of his open hand at the side of his head, to represent a cockade—"what d'ye call it—in his hat; and who was he, did you think? 'Billy Rogers,' of Muck; his father was in the canal ——"

"In the canal!" exclaimed Lady Hester, in affright.

"Yes, my Lady; in the Grand Canal,—an inspector at forty pounds a year,—the devil a farthin' more; and if you seen the son here, with two pins in his cravat, and a gold chain twisting and turning over his waistcoat, with his hat on one side, and yellow gloves, new every morning, throwing down the 'Naps' at that thieving game they call 'Red and Black,' you'd say he was the Duke of Leinster!"

"Was he so like his Grace?" asked Lady Hester, with a delightful simplicity.

"No; but grander!" replied Dalton, with a wave of his hand.

"It is really as you remark, very true," resumed her Ladyship; "it is quite impossible to venture upon an acquaintance out of England; and I cordially concur in the caution you practise."

"So I'm always telling the girls,—'better no company than trumpery!' not that I don't like a bit of sociality as well as ever I did,—a snug little party of one's own,—people whose fathers and mothers had names,—the real old stock of the land. But to be taking up with every chance rapscallion you meet on the cross-roads,—to be hand and glove with this, that, and the other, them never was my sentiments."

It is but justice to confess there was less of hypocrisy in the bland smile Lady Hester returned to this speech than might be suspected; for, what between the rapidity of Dalton's utterance, and the peculiar accentuation he gave to certain words, she did not really comprehend one syllable of what he said. Meanwhile, the two girls sat silent and motionless. Nelly, in all the suffering of shame at the absurdity of her father's tone,—the vulgarity of an assumption she had fondly hoped

years of poverty might have tamed down, if not obliterated; Kate, in mute admiration of their lovely visitor, of whose graces she never wearied. Nor did Lady Hester make any effort to include them in the conversation; she had come out expressly for one sole object,—to captivate Mr. Dalton; and she would suffer nothing to interfere with her project. To this end, she heard his long and tiresome monologues about Irish misery and distress, narrated with an adherence to minute and local details, that made the whole incomprehensible; she listened to him with well-feigned interest, in his narratives of the Daltons of times long past,—of their riotous and extravagant living, their lawlessness, and their daring; nor did she permit her attention to flag while he recounted scenes and passages of domestic annals, that might almost have filled a page of savage history.

"How sorry you must have felt to leave a country so dear by all its associations and habits," sighed she, as he finished a narrative of more than ordinary horrors.

"Ain't I breaking my heart over it? Ain't I fretting myself to mere skin and bone?" said he, with a glance of condolence over his portly figure. "But what could I do? I was forced to come out here for the education of the children—bother it—for education!—but it ruins everybody now-a-days. When I was a boy, reading and writing, with a trifle of figures, was enough for any one. If you could tell what twenty bullocks cost, at two pounds four and sixpence a beast, and what was the price of a score of hoggets, at fifteen shillings a-head, and wrote your name and address in a good round hand, 'twas seldom you needed more; but now you have to learn everything—ay, sorrow bit, but it's learning the way to do what every one knows by nature—riding—dancing—no, but even walking, I'm told, they teach, too! Then there's French, you must learn, for talking!—and Italian to sing!—and German—upon my soul, I believe it's to snore in!—and what with music, dancing and drawing, everybody is brought up like a play-actor."

"There is, as you remark, far too much display in modern education, Mr. Dalton; but you would seem fortunate enough to have avoided the error. A young lady whose genius can accomplish such a work as this——"

"'Tis one of Nelly's, sure enough," said he, looking at the group to which she pointed, but feeling even more shame than pride in the avowal.

The sound of voices—a very unusual noise—from the door without, now broke in upon the conversation, and Andy's cracked treble could be distinctly heard in loud altercation.

"Nelly! Kitty! I say," cried Dalton, "see what's the matter with

that old devil. There's something come over him to-day, I think, for he won't be quiet for two minutes together."

Kate accordingly hastened to discover the cause of a tumult in which now the sound of laughter mingled.

As *we*, however, enjoy the prerogative of knowing the facts before they could reach *her*, we may as well inform the reader that Andy, whose intelligence seemed to have been preternaturally awakened by the sight of an attorney, had been struck by seeing two strangers enter the house-door and leisurely ascend the stairs. At such a moment, and with his weak brain filled with its latest impression, the old man at once set them down as bailiffs come to arrest his master. He hobbled after them, therefore, as well as he could, and just reached the landing as Mr. Jekyl, with his friend Onslow, had arrived at the door.

"Mr. Dalton lives here, I believe," said Jekyl.

"Anan," muttered Andy, who, although he heard the question, affected not to have done so, and made this an excuse for inserting himself between them and the door.

"I was asking if Mr. Dalton lived here?" cried Jekyl louder, and staring with some astonishment at the old fellow's manœuvre.

"Who said he did, eh?" said Andy, with an effort at fierceness.

"Perhaps it's on the lower story?" asked Onslow.

"Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't, then!" was the answer.

"We wish to see him, my good man," said Jekyl; "or, at least, to send a message to him."

"Sure! I know well enough what ye want," said Andy, with a wave of his hand. "'Tisn't the first of yer like I seen!"

"And what may that be," asked Onslow, not a little amused by the blended silliness and shrewdness of the old man's face.

"Ayeh! I know yez well," rejoined he, shaking his head. "Be off, then, and don't provoke the house! Away wid yez, before the servants sees ye."

"This is a rare fellow," said Onslow, who, less interested than his companion about the visit, was quite satisfied to amuse himself with old Andy. "So you'll not even permit us to send our respects, and ask how your master is?"

"I'm certain you'll be more reasonable," simpered Jekyl, as he drew a very weighty-looking purse from his pocket, and, with a considerable degree of ostentation, seemed preparing to open it.

The notion of bribery, and in such a cause, was too much for Andy's feelings; and, with a sudden jerk of his hand, he dashed the purse out of Jekyl's fingers, and scattered the contents all over the landing and stairs. "Ha, ha!" cried he, wildly, "'tis only ha'pence he has after

All is not gold that glitters.

all!" And the taunt was so far true that the ground was strewn with kreutzers and other copper coins of the very smallest value.

As for Onslow, the scene was too ludicrous for him any longer to restrain his laughter; and although Jekyl laughed too, and seemed to relish the absurdity of his mistake, as he called it, having put in his pocket a collection of rare and curious coins, his cheek, as he bent to gather them up, was suffused with a deeper flush than the mere act of stooping should occasion. It was precisely at this moment that Kate Dalton made her appearance.

"What is the matter, Andy?" asked she, turning to the old man, who appeared, by his air and attitude, as if determined to guard the doorway.

"Two spalpeens, that want to take the master; that's what it is," said he, in a voice of passion.

"Your excellent old servant has much mistaken us, Miss Dalton," said Jekyl, with his most deferential of manners. "My friend, Captain Onslow"—here he moved his hand towards George, who bowed—"and myself, having planned a day's shooting in the 'Moorg,' have come to request the pleasure of Mr. Dalton's company."

"Oh, the thievin' villains!" muttered Andy; "that's the way they'll catch him."

Meanwhile Kate, having promised to convey their polite invitation, expressed her fears that her father's health might be unequal to the exertion. Jekyl immediately took issue upon the point, and hoped, and wondered, and fancied, and "flattered himself" so much, that Kate at last discovered she had been drawn into a little discussion, when she simply meant to have returned a brief answer; and while she was hesitating how to put an end to an interview that had already lasted too long, Dalton himself appeared.

"Is it with me these gentlemen have their business?" said he, angrily, while he rudely resisted all Andy's endeavours to hold him back.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Dalton," cried Jekyl, warmly, "it is such a pleasure to see you quite restored to health again! Here we are—Captain Onslow, Mr. Dalton—thinking of a little excursion after the woodcocks down the Moorg Thal; and I have been indulging the hope that you'll come along with us."

The very hint of an attention, the merest suggestion that bordered on a civility, struck a chord in old Dalton's nature that moved all his sympathies. It was at once a recognition of himself and his ancestry for generations back; it was a rehabilitation of all the Daltons of Mount Dalton for centuries past; and as he extended a hand to each, and

invited them to walk in, he half felt himself at home again, doing the honours of his house, and extending those hospitalities that had brought him to beggary.

"Are you serious about the shooting party?" whispered Onslow to Jekyl, as he walked forward.

"Of course not. It's only a 'Grecian horse,' to get inside the citadel."

"My daughter, Miss Dalton; Mr. Jekyl—Miss Kate Dalton. Your friend's name, I believe, is——"

"Captain Onslow."

Lady Hester started at the name, and, rising, at once said,

"Oh, George! *I* must introduce you to my fair friends. Miss Dalton, this gentleman calls me 'mamma;' or, at least, if he does not, it is from politeness. Captain Onslow—Mr. Dalton. Now, by what fortunate event came you here?"

"Ought I not to ask the same question of your Ladyship?" said George, archly.

"If you like; only that, as I asked first——"

"You shall be answered first. Lady Hester Onslow, allow me to present Mr. Albert Jekyl."

"Oh, indeed!" drawled out Lady Hester, as, with her very coldest bow, she surveyed Mr. Jekyl through her glass, and then turned away to finish her conversation with Ellen.

Jekyl was not the man to feel a slight repulse as a defeat; but, at the same time, saw that the present was not the moment to risk an engagement. He saw, besides, that, by engaging Dalton in conversation, he should leave Lady Hester and Onslow at liberty to converse with the two sisters, and, by this act of generosity, entitle himself to gratitude on all sides. And, after all, among the smaller martyrdoms of this life, what self-sacrifice exceeds his who, out of pure philanthropy, devotes himself to the "bore" of the party. Honour to him who can lead the forlorn hope of this stronghold of weariness. Great be his praises who can turn from the seductive smiles of beauty, and the soft voices of youth, and only give eye and ear to the tiresome and uninteresting. High among the achievements of unobtrusive heroism should this claim rank; and if you doubt it, my dear reader, if you feel disposed to hold cheaply such darings, try it—try even for once. Take your place beside that deaf old lady in the light auburn wig, or draw your chair near to that elderly gentleman, whose twinkling grey eyes and tremulous lip bespeak an endless volubility on the score of personal reminiscences. Do this, too, within ear-shot of pleasant voices and merry laughter—of that tinkling ripple that tells of conversation flowing lightly on, like a summer-

A small Tea Party.

stream, clear where shallow, and reflective where deep! Listen to the wearisome bead-roll of family fortunes—the births, deaths, and marriages of those you never saw, and hoped never to see—hear the long narratives of past events, garbled, mistaken, and misstated, with praise and censure ever misapplied, and then, I say, you will feel that, although such actions are not rewarded with red ribbons or blue, they yet demand a moral courage and a perseverance that in wider fields win high distinction.

Albert Jekyl was a proficient in this great art; indeed, his powers developed themselves according to the exigency, so that the more insufferably tiresome his companion, the more seemingly attentive and interested did he become. His features were, in fact, a kind of "Bore-ometer," in which, from the liveliness of the expression, you might calculate the stupidity of the tormentor; and the mercury of his nature rose, not fell, under pressure. And so you would have said had you but seen him that evening, as seated beside Dalton, he heard, for hours long, how Irish gentlemen were ruined and their fortunes squandered. What jolly times they were, when men resisted the law and never feared a debt! Not that while devouring all the "rapparee" experiences of the father he had no eye for the daughters, and did not see what was passing around him. Ay, that did he, and mark well, how Lady Hester attached herself to Kate Dalton, flattered by every sign of her unbought admiration, and delighted with the wondering homage of the artless girl. He watched Onslow, too, turn from the inanimate charms of Nelly's sculptured figures, to gaze upon the long dark lashes and brilliant complexion of her sister. He saw all the little comedy that went on around him, even to poor Nelly's confusion, as she assisted Andy to arrange a tea-table, and, for the first time since their arrival, proceed to make use of that little service of white and gold which, placed on a marble table for show, constitutes the invariable decoration of every humble German drawing-room. He even overheard her, as she left the room, giving Andy her directions a dozen times over, how he was to procure the tea, and the sugar, and the milk—extravagances she did not syllable without a sigh. He saw and heard everything, and rapidly drew his own inferences, not alone of their poverty, but of their unfitness to struggle with it.

"And yet, I'd wager, these people," said he to himself, "are revelling in superfluities; at least, as compared to *me!* But, so it is, the rock that one man ties round his neck, another would make a stepping stone of!" This satisfactory conclusion gave additional sweetness to the bland smile with which he took his tea-cup from Nelly's hand, while he pronounced the beverage the very best he had ever tasted out of Moscow. And so we must leave the party.

CHAPTER XV.

CONTRASTS.

"So you think, Grounsell, I may be able to leave this in a day or two?" said Sir Stafford, as, on the day following the events we have just related, he slowly walked up and down his dressing-room.

"By the end of the week, if the weather only continue fine, we may be on the road again."

"I'm glad of it—heartily glad of it! Not that, as regarded myself, it mattered much where I was laid up in dock; but I find that this isolation, instead of drawing the members of my family more closely together, has but served to widen the breach between them. Lady Hester and Sydney rarely meet; George sees neither of them, and rarely comes near me, so that the sooner we go hence the better for all of us."

Grounsell gave a dry nod of assent, without speaking.

"Sydney is very anxious to go and pass some time with her aunt Conway; but I foresee, that if I consent, the difference between Lady Hester and her will then become an irreconcilable quarrel. You don't agree with me, Grounsell?"

"I do not. I never knew the ends of a fractured bone unite by grating them eternally against each other."

"And, as for George, the lounging habits of his service and cigars have steeped him in an indolence from which there is no emerging. I scarcely know what to do with him."

"It's hard enough to decide upon," rejoined Grounsell; "he has some pursuits, but not one ambition."

"He has very fair abilities, certainly," said Sir Stafford, half peevishly.

"Very fair!" nodded Grounsell.

"A good memory—a quick apprehension."

"He has one immense deficiency, for which nothing can compensate," said the Doctor, solemnly,

"Application—industry?"

"No, with *his* opportunities a great deal is often acquired with comparatively light labour. I mean a greater and more important element."

"He wants steadiness, you think?"

"No; I'll tell you what he wants—he wants pluck!"

Sir Stafford's cheek became suddenly crimson, and his blue eyes grew almost black in the angry expression of the moment.

"Pluck, sir? My son deficient in courage?"

"Not as you understand it now," resumed Grounsell, calmly. "He has enough, and more than enough, to shoot me or anybody else that would impugn it. The quality I mean is of a very different order. It is the daring to do a thing badly to-day in the certain confidence that you will do it better to-morrow, and succeed perfectly in it this day twelve-month. He has not pluck to encounter repeated failures, and yet return every morning to the attack; he has not pluck to be bullied by mediocrity in the sure and certain confidence that he will live to surpass it; in a word, he has not that pluck which resists the dictation of inferior minds, and inspires self-reliance through self-respect."

"I confess I cannot see that in the station he is like to occupy such qualities are at all essential," said Sir Stafford, almost haughtily.

"Twenty thousand a year is a fine thing, and may dispense with a great many gifts in its possessor; and a man like myself, who never owned a twentieth of the amount, may be a precious bad judge of the requisites to spend it suitably; but I'll tell you one thing, Onslow, that organ the phrenologists call "Combativeness" is the best in the whole skull."

"I think your Irish friend Dalton must have been imparting some of his native prejudices to you," said Onslow, smiling; "and, by the way, when have you seen him?"

"I went to call there last night, but I found a tea-party, and didn't go in. Only think of these people, with beggary staring them on every side, sending out for "Caravan" tea at I don't know how many florins a pound."

"I heard of it; but then, once and a-way——"

"Once and a-way! Ay, but once is ruin."

"Well, I hope Prichard has arranged everything by this time. He has gone over this morning to complete the business; so that I trust, when we leave Baden, these worthy people will be in the enjoyment of easier circumstances."

"I see him crossing over the street now. I'll leave you together."

"No, no, Grounsell; wait and hear his report; we may want your advice besides, for I'm not quite clear that this large sum of arrears should be left at Dalton's untrammelled disposal, as Mr. Prichard intended it should be a test of that excellent gentleman's prudence."

Mr. Prichard's knock was now heard at the door, and the next moment he entered. His pale countenance was slightly flushed, and in the expression of his face it might be read, that he had come from a scene of unusual excitement.

"I have failed, completely failed, Sir Stafford," said he, with a sigh,

on the table before

followed these words,

not being able clearly to

to prevent any searching

in a covering of techni-

in whose acuteness he reposes

with the difficulty of engaging

still less was I on meeting with

A very quietly-mannered, unassuming

which once upon a time must have

alone in the drawing-room awaiting me.

and were it not for an air of great neat-

perhaps call it even poor. I mention all these

because they bear upon what ensued.

Without waiting for me to open my communication, she began by a slight apology for her presence there, occasioned as she said by her father's ill-health and consequent incapacity to transact business; after which she added a few words expressive of a hope that I would make my statement in the most simple and intelligible form, divested so far as might be of technical phraseology, and such as, to use her own words, a very unlettered person like herself might comprehend.

"This opening, I confess, somewhat startled me; I scarcely expected so much from her father's daughter; but I acquiesced and went on. As we concocted the whole plot together here, Sir Stafford, it is needless that I should weary you by a repetition of it. It is enough that I say, I omitted nothing of plausibility, either in proof of the bequest, or in the description of the feeling that prompted its fulfilment. I descanted upon the happy event which, in the course of what seemed an accident, had brought the two families together, and prefaced their business intercourse by a friendship. I adverted to the good influence increased comforts would exercise upon her father's health. I spoke of her sister and her brother in the fuller enjoyment of all that became their name and birth. She heard me to the very end with deep attention, never once interrupting, nor even by a look or gesture expressing dissent.

"At last, when I had concluded, she said, 'This, then, is a bequest?'

"I replied affirmatively.

"'In that case,' said she, 'the terms on which it is conveyed will solve all the difficulty of our position. If my uncle Godfrey intended this legacy to be a peace-offering, however late it has been in coming, we should have no hesitation in accepting it; if he meant that his gene-

rosity should be trammelled by conditions, or subject in any way to the good pleasure of a third party, the matter will have a different aspect. Which is the truth?'

"I hesitated at this point-blank appeal, so different from what I looked for; and she at once asked to see the will. Disconcerted still more, I now prevaricated, stating that I had not brought the document with me; that a memorandum of its provisions would, I had supposed, prove sufficient; and finally assured her that acceptance of the bequest involved neither a condition nor a pledge.

"'It may, however, involve an obligation, Sir,' said she, firmly. 'Let us learn if such be the case.'

"Are you so proud, Miss Dalton," said I, "that you cannot even submit to an obligation?"

"She blushed deeply, and with a weak voice answered,

"'We are too poor to incur a debt.'

"Seeing it was useless to dwell longer on this part of the subject, I adverted to her father's increasing age, his breaking health, and the necessity of affording him a greater share of comforts, but she suddenly stopped me, saying,

"'You may make my refusal of this favour—for such it is, and nothing less—a more painful duty than I deemed it, but you cannot alter my resolution, Sir. Poverty, so long as it is honourable, has nothing mean nor undeserving about it, but dependence can never bestow happiness. It is true, as you say, that my dear father might have around him many of those little luxuries that he once was used to; but with what changed hearts would not his children minister them to him? Where would be that high prompting sense of duty that every self-sacrifice is met by now? Where that rich reward of an approving spirit that lightens toil and makes even weariness blessed? Our humble fortunes have linked us closer together; the storms of the world have made us draw nearer to each other, have given us one heart, hope, and love alike. Leave us then to struggle on, nor cast the gloom of dependence over days that all the ills of poverty could not darken. We are happy now; who can tell what we should become hereafter?'

"I tried to turn her thoughts upon her brother, but she quickly stopped me, saying,

"'Frank is a soldier; the rewards in his career are never withheld from the deserving; at all events, wealth would be unsuitable to him. He never knew but narrow fortunes, and the spirit that becomes a more exalted condition is not the growth of a day.'

"I next ventured, but with every caution and delicacy, to inquire

as he seated himself, and threw a heavy roll of paper [illegible] him.

As Sir Stafford did not break the pause that [illegible] Prichard resumed.

"I told you last night that Mr. Dalton [illegible] understand my communication, which I [illegible] scrutiny on his part, I did my best to en[illegible] calities, referred me to his eldest daught[illegible] much confidence. If I was not impre[illegible] such an adversary, from his descrip[illegible] the young lady this morning. [illegible] person, with considerable good [illegible] been actual beauty, was sca[illegible] Her dress was studiously [illegible] ness throughout, I shoul[illegible] [illegible] in some quiet matters with a certai[illegible] [illegible] present nothing remarkable,

"Without waitin[illegible] [illegible] we are happy—so happy—that slight apology fo[illegible] [illegible] calm of life may not be lasting, father's ill-heal[illegible] which she ad[illegible] [illegible] persuade her to recal her decision, but statement in [illegible] show any sign of hesitation. It was when might l[illegible] [illegible] the reason of refusal. Then suddenly her very [illegible] [illegible] trembled, and such a change came over her [illegible] [illegible] at my own words.

so [illegible] 'If you mean that inordinate self-esteem that [illegible] [illegible] sympathy—that rejects an obligation from mere [illegible] not the feeling. Our pride is not in our self-[illegible] step in life teaches us how much we owe to others; [illegible] in lot, and humble in means, we have kept, and [illegible] the motives and principles that guided us in happier [illegible] may call us proud, for we are so;—proud that our [illegible] us mean—proud that in a strange land we have [illegible] kindness, and even of affection—proud that, with-[illegible] or graces which attract, we have drawn towards us [illegible] generosity of which you are now the messenger. [illegible] own pride in all these.'

[illegible] further was useless; and only asking, that if by any [illegible] circumstances she might be induced to alter her re-[illegible] still consider the proposition as open to her acceptance, [illegible]

[illegible] provoking," exclaimed Onslow.

r!" cried Grounsell; "you call it provoking! That where
nfer a benefit you discover a spirit greater than all the
gave, or ever will give! A noble nature, that soars
f fortune, provoking!"
e to myself," replied Onslow, tartly; "and I
g that I am unable to make a recompense
nflicted a wrong!"
this age of money-seeking and gold-
art is uncorrupted and incorruptible,"

ave believed it!" said Prichard.
Grounsell, bluntly. "Yours is not
frequently met with; nor have I met

said Prichard, mildly, "that even in *my* career I
many acts of high generosity."
osity! Yes, I know what that means. A sister who surren-
er legacy to a spendthrift brother—a childless widow that denies
herself the humblest means of comfort to help the ruined brother of her
lost husband—a wife who places in a reckless husband's hand the last
little remnant of fortune that was hoarded against the day of utter des-
titution; and they are always women who do these things—saving,
scraping, careful creatures, full of self-denial and small economies. Not
like your generous men, as the world call them, whose free-heartedness
is nothing but selfishness—whose liberality is the bait to catch flattery.
But it is not of generosity I speak here. To give, even to one's last
farthing, is far easier than to refuse help when you are needy. To draw
the rags of poverty closer, to make their folds drape decently, and hide
the penury within, that is the victory, indeed."

"Mark you," cried Onslow, laughing; "it is an old bachelor says all
this."

Grounsell's face became scarlet, and as suddenly pale as death; and,
although he made an effort to speak, not a sound issued from his lips.
For an instant the pause which ensued was unbroken, when a tap was
heard at the door. It was a message from Lady Hester, requesting, if
Sir Stafford were disengaged, to be permitted to speak with him.

"You're not going, Grounsell?" cried Sir Stafford, as he saw the
Doctor seize his hat; but he hastened out of the room without speaking.
While the lawyer, gathering up his papers, prepared to follow him.

"We shall see you at dinner, Prichard?" said Sir Stafford. "I have
some hope of joining the party myself to-day."

Mr. Prichard bowed his acknowledgments, and departed.

And now the old Baronet sat down to ponder in his mind the reasons for so strange an event as a visit in the forenoon from Lady Hester. "What can it mean? She can't want money," thought he; "'tis but the other day I sent her a large check. Is she desirous of going back to England again? Are there any new disagreements at work?" This last thought reminded him of those of whom he had been so lately hearing—of those whose narrow fortunes had drawn them nearer to each other, rendering them more tolerant and more attached, while in his own family, where affluence prevailed, he saw nothing but dissension.

As he sat pondering over this not too pleasant problem, a tall and serious-looking footman entered the room, rolling before him an arm-chair. Another and not less dignified functionary followed, with cushions and a foot-warmer. Signs which Sir Stafford at once read as indicative of a long interview; for her Ladyship's preparations were always adopted with a degree of forethought and care, that she very rarely exhibited in matters of real consequence.

Sir Stafford was contemplating these august demonstrations, when the solemn voice of an upper servant announced Lady Hester, and, after a second's pause, she swept into the room in all that gauzy amplitude of costume, that gives to the wearer a seeming necessity of inhabiting the most spacious apartments of a palace.

"How d'ye do?" said she, languidly, as she sank down into her chair. "I had not the least notion how far this room was off! If Clements has not been taking me a tour of the whole house!"

Mr. Clements, who was still busily engaged in disposing and arranging the cushions, blandly assured her Ladyship that they had come by the most direct way.

"I'm sorry for it," said she, peevishly, "for I shall have the more fatigue in going back again. There, you're only making it worse. You never can learn that I don't want to be propped up like an invalid. That will do; you may leave the room. Sir Stafford, would you be good enough to draw that blind a little lower, the sun is directly in my eyes. Dear me, how yellow you are! or is it the light in this horrid room? Am I so dreadfully bilious-looking?"

"On the contrary," said he, smiling, "I should pronounce you in the most perfect enjoyment of health."

"Oh, of course, I have no doubt of that. I only wonder you didn't call it 'rude health.' I cannot conceive anything more thoroughly provoking than the habit of estimating one's sufferings by the very efforts made to suppress them."

"Sufferings, my dear; I really was not aware that you had sufferings"

"I am quite sure of that; nor is it my habit to inflict others with

complaint. I'm sure your friend, Mr. Grounsell, would be equally unable to acknowledge their existence. How I do hate that man! and I know, Stafford, he hates us. Oh, you smile as if to say, 'Only some of us;' but I tell you he detests us all, and his old school-fellow—as he vulgarly persists in calling you—as much as the others."

"I sincerely hope you are mistaken ——"

"Polite, certainly; you trust that his dislike is limited to myself. Not that for my own part I have the least objection to any amount of detestation with which he may honour me; it is the tribute the low and obscure invariably render the well-born, and I am quite ready to accept it; but I own it is a little hard that I must submit to the infliction beneath my own roof."

"My dear Hester, how often have I assured you that you were mistaken; and that what you regard as disrespect to yourself is the roughness of an unpolished, but sterling, nature. The ties which have grown up between him and me since we were boys together ought not to be snapped for sake of a mere misunderstanding; and if you cannot or will not estimate him for the good qualities he unquestionably possesses, at least bear with him for my sake."

"So I should—so I strive to do; but the evil does not end there; he inspires everybody with the same habits of disrespect and indifference. Did you remark Clements, a few moments since, when I spoke to him about that cushion?"

"No, I can't say that I did."

"Why should you; nobody ever does trouble their head about anything that relates to my happiness! Well, I remarked it, and saw the supercilious smile he assumed when I told him that the pillow was wrong. He looked over at *you*, too, as though to say, 'You see how impossible it is to please her.'"

"I certainly saw nothing of that."

"Even Prichard, that formerly was the most diffident of men, is now so much at his ease, so very much at home in my presence. It is quite amusing. It was but yesterday he asked me to take wine with him at dinner. The anachronism was bad enough, but only fancy the liberty!"

"And what did you do?" asked Sir Stafford, with difficulty repressing a smile.

"I affected not to hear, hoping he would not expose himself before the servants by a repetition of the request. But he went on, 'Will your Ladyship'—I assure you he said that—'will your Ladyship do me the honour to drink wine with me?' I merely stared at him, but never took any notice of his speech. Would you believe it! he returned to the charge again, and with his hand on his wine-glass began, 'I have

And now the old Baronet sat down to ponder in his mind t
so strange an event as a visit in the forenoon from Lady Hest
it mean? She can't want money," thought he; "'tis but
sent her a large check. Is she desirous of going back t
Are there any new disagreements at work?" This las
him of those of whom he had been so lately heari
narrow fortunes had drawn them nearer to each
more tolerant and more attached, while in his
ence prevailed, he saw nothing but dissension.

As he sat pondering over this not too pl
serious-looking footman entered the room.
chair. Another and not less dignified
cushions and a foot-warmer. Signs whic
indicative of a long interview; for h
always adopted with a degree of fo
rarely exhibited in matters of real co

Sir Stafford was contemplating t
solemn voice of an upper servant
second's pause, she swept into t
costume, that gives to the wea
most spacious apartments of a

"How d'ye do?" said sh
"I had not the least noti
not been taking me a to

Mr. Clements, who w
the cushions, blandly
most direct way.

"I'm sorry for it."
fatigue in going
You never can le
That will do; yo
enough to draw
Dear me, how
Am I so dre

"On the
the most

"Oh,
call it
voking
mad

...tly, and
...tures. "You
...y aunt Walling-
...sure I have had good
...they have not the
...very morality is not

...speaking," asked Sir

...proudly.
...Sir Stafford: "her own father

...Sir Stafford."
...himself boasting that
...in Grosvenor-
...and as he
...successful enterprise,
...of him."

...Hester, supercilioously: "and
...embellishing an

...Mayor of London!"
...but what has all this
...but remember what
...everything."

Although the appeal was palpably directed to Sir Stafford he sat silent and motionless, patiently awaiting the moment when recollection might enable her to resume.

"Dear me! how tiresome it is. I cannot think of what I came about, and you will not assist me in the least."

"Up to this moment you have given me no clue to it," said Sir Stafford, with a smile. "It was not to speak of Grounsell?"

"Of course not. I hate even to think of him!"

"Of Prichard, perhaps?" asked he, with a half-sly twinkle of the eye.

"Just as little!"

"Possibly your friend Colonel Haggerstone was in your thoughts?"

"Pray, do not call him my friend. I know very little of the gentleman; I intend even to know less. I declined to receive him this morning, when he sent up his card."

"An attention I fear he has not shown that poor creature he wounded, Grounsell tells me."

"Oh, I have it!" said she, suddenly; the allusion to Hans at once recalling the Daltons, and bringing to mind the circumstances she desired to remember. "It was exactly of these poor people I came to speak. You must know, Sir Stafford, that I have made the acquaintance of a most interesting family, here—a father and two daughters—named Dalton——"

"Grounsell has already told me so," interrupted Sir Stafford.

"Of course, then, every step I have taken in this intimacy has been represented in the most odious light. The amiable Doctor will have, doubtless, imputed to me the least worthy motives for knowing persons in their station?"

"On the contrary, Hester. If he expressed any qualification to the circumstance, it was in the form of a fear, lest the charms of your society, and the graces of your manner, might indispose them to return with patience to the dull round of their daily privations."

"Indeed!" said she, superciliously. "A weak dose of his own acquaintance would be, then, the best antidote he could advise them! But, really, I must not speak of this man; any allusion to him is certain to jar my nerves, and irritate my feelings for the whole day after. I want to interest you about these Daltons."

"Nothing more easy, my dear, since I already know something about them."

"The Doctor being your informant," said she, snappishly.

"No, no, Hester; many, many years ago, certain relations existed between us, and I grieve to say that Mr. Dalton has reason to regard me in no favourable light; and it was but the very moment I received

your message, I was learning from Prichard the failure of an effort I had made to repair a wrong. I will not weary you with a long and a sad story, but briefly mention that Mr. Dalton's late wife was a distant relative of my own."

"Yes, yes; I see it all. There was a little love in the business—an old flame revived in after-life—nothing serious, of course—but jealousies and misconstructions—to any extent. Dear me, and that was the reason she died of a broken heart!" It was hard to say if Sir Stafford was more amused at the absurdity of this imputation, or stung by the cool indifference with which she uttered it; nor was it easy to know how the struggle within him would terminate, when she went on. "It does appear so silly to see a pair of elderly gentlemen raking up a difference out of an '*amourette*' of the past century. You are very fortunate to have so quiet a spot to exhibit in!"

"I am sorry to destroy an illusion so very full of amusement, Lady Hester; but I owe it to all parties to say, that your pleasant fancy has not even the shadow of a colour. I never even saw Mrs. Dalton—never have yet met her husband. The event to which I was about to allude, when you interrupted me, related to a bequest——"

"Oh! I know the whole business, now! It was at your suit that dreadful mortgage was foreclosed, and these dear people were driven away from their ancient seat of Mount Dalton. I'm sure I've heard the story at least ten times over, but never suspected that your name was mixed up with it. I do assure you, Sir Stafford, that they have never dropped the most distant hint of you in connexion with that sad episode."

"They have been but just, Lady Hester," said he, gravely. "I never did hold a mortgage over this property, still less exercised the severe right you speak of. But it is quite needless to pursue a narrative that taxes your patience so severely; enough to say, that through Prichard's mediation, I have endeavoured to persuade Mr. Dalton that I was the trustee, under a will, of a small annuity on his life. He has peremptorily refused to accept it, although, as I am informed, living in circumstances of great poverty."

"Poor they must be, certainly. The house is wretchedly furnished, and the girls wear such clothes as I never saw before; not that they are even the worn and faded finery of better days, but actually the coarse stuffs such as the peasants wear!"

"So I have heard."

"Not even an edging of cheap lace round their collars; not a bow of ribbon; not an ornament of the humblest kind about them."

"And both handsome, I am told?"

"The younger, beautiful!—the deepest blue eyes in the world, with long fringed lashes, and the most perfect mouth you can imagine. The elder very pretty too, but sad looking, for she has a fearful lameness, poor thing. They say it came from a fall off a horse, but I suspect it must have begun in infancy; one of those dreadful things they call 'spine.' Like all persons in her condition, she is monstrously clever: carves the most beautiful little groups in boxwood, and models in clay and plaister. She is a dear, mild, gentle thing, but I suspect, with all that infirmity of temper, that comes of long illness, at least, she is seldom in high spirits like her sister. Kate, the younger girl, is my favourite; a fine, generous, warm-hearted creature, full of life and animation, and so fond of *me* already."

If Sir Stafford did not smile at the undue emphasis laid upon the last few words, it was not that he had not read their full significance.

"And Mr. Dalton himself—what is *he* like?"

"Like nothing I ever met before: the oddest mixture of right sentiments and wrong inferences—of benevolence, cruelty, roughness, gentleness; the most refined consideration, and the most utter disregard for other people and their feelings—that ever existed. You never can guess what will be his sentiments at any moment, or on any subject, except on the question of family, when his pride almost savours of insanity. I believe, in his own country, he would be nothing strange nor singular, but out of it he is a figure unsuited to any landscape."

"It is hard to say how much of this peculiarity may have come of adverse fortune," said Sir Stafford, thoughtfully.

"I'm certain he was always the same; at least, it would be impossible to imagine him anything different. But I have not come to speak of him, but of his daughter Kate, in whom I am deeply interested. You must know, Sir Stafford, that I have formed a little plan, for which I want your aid and concurrence. It is to take this dear girl along with us to Italy."

"Take her to Italy? In what position, Lady Hester? You surely never intended any menial station?"

"Of course not: a kind of humble friend—what they call a 'companion' in the newspapers; to have always with one. She is exactly the creature to dissipate low spirits and banish *ennui*, and, with the advantages of training and teaching, will become a most attractive girl. As it is, she has not been quite neglected. Her French accent is very pure; German, I conclude, she talks fluently; she plays prettily—at least, as well as one can judge on that vile tinkling old harpsichord, whose legs dance every time it is touched; and sings very pleasingly those little German ballads that are now getting into fashion. In fact,

it is the tone of society—that mannerism of the world—she is deficient in more than anything else."

"She certainly could not study in a better school than yours, Lady Hester; but I see some very great objections to the whole scheme, and without alluding to such as relate to ourselves, but simply those that regard the young lady herself. Would it be a kindness to withdraw her from the sphere wherein she is happy and contented, to mingle for a season or so in another and very different rank? contracting new habits of thought, new ideas, new associations—learning each day to look down upon that humble lot to which she must eventually return."

"She need not return to it. She is certain to marry, and marry well. A girl with so many attractions as she will possess, may aspire to a very high match indeed!"

"This is too hazardous a game of life to please my fancy," said Sir Stafford, dubiously. "We ought to look every contingency in the face in such a matter as this."

"I have given the subject the very deepest consideration," replied Lady Hester, authoritatively. "I have turned the question over and over in my mind, and have not seen a single difficulty for which there is not an easy remedy."

"Sydney certainly ought to be consulted."

"I have done so already. She is charmed with the project. She sees, perhaps, how few companionable qualities she herself possesses, and anticipates that Miss Dalton will supply that place towards me that she is too indolent and too indifferent to fill."

"How would the family receive such a proposition; they seem to be very proud. Is it likely that they would listen to a project of this nature?"

"There lies the only difficulty; nor need it be an insuperable one, if we manage cleverly. The affair will require delicate treatment, because, if we merely invite her to accompany us, they will naturally enough decline an invitation, to comply with which would involve a costly outlay in dress and ornament, quite impossible in their circumstances. This must be a matter of diplomacy, of which the first step is, however, already taken."

"The first step! How do you mean?"

"Simply, that I have already, but in the deepest confidence, hinted the possibility of the project to Kate Dalton, and she is wild with delight at the bare thought of it. The dear child! with what rapture she heard me speak of the balls, and fêtes, and theatres, of the great world!—of the thousand fascinations society has in store for all who have a rightful claim to its homage, the tribute rendered to beauty, greater than that conceded to rank or genius itself! I told her of all these, and I showed her my diamonds!"

Sir Stafford made, involuntarily, a slight gesture with his hand, as though to say, "This last was the *coup-de-grace*."

"So far, then, as Kate is concerned, she will be a willing ally; nor do I anticipate any opposition from her quiet, submissive sister, who seems to doat upon her. The Papa, indeed, is like to prove refractory; but this must be our business to overcome."

Lady Hester, who at the opening of the interview had spoken with all the listlessness of *ennui*, had gradually worked herself up to a species of ardour, that made her words flow rapidly: a sign well known to Sir Stafford, that her mind was bent upon an object that would not admit of gainsay. Some experience had taught him the impolicy of absolute resistance, and trained him to a tactic of waiting and watching for eventualities; which, whether the campaign be civil, military, or conjugal, is not without a certain degree of merit. In the present case there were several escape-valves. The Daltons were three in number, and should be unanimous. All the difficulties of the plan should be arranged, not alone to their perfect satisfaction, but without a wound to their delicacy. Grounsell was certain to be a determined opponent to the measure, and would of course be consulted upon it. And, lastly, if everything worked well and favourably, Lady Hester herself was by no means certain, to wish for it, the day after she had conquered all opposition.

These, and many similar reasons, showed Sir Stafford that he might safely concede a concurrence that need never become practical, and, making a merit of his necessity, he affected to yield to arguments that had no value in his eyes.

"How do you propose to open the campaign, Hester?" asked he, after a pause.

"I have arranged it all," said she, with animation. "We must visit the Daltons together—or, better still—you shall go alone. No, no; a letter will be the right thing, a very carefully-written letter, that shall refute by anticipation every possible objection to the plan, and show the Daltons the enormous advantages they must derive from it."

"As, for instance?" said Sir Stafford, with apparent anxiety to be instructed.

"Enormous they certainly will be!" exclaimed she; "first of all, Kate, as I have said, is certain to marry well, and will be thus in a position to benefit the others, who, poor things, can do nothing for themselves."

"Very true, my dear; very true. You see all these things far more rapidly, and more clearly, than I do."

"I have thought so long and so much about it, I suppose there are

few contingencies of the case have escaped me; and now that I learn how you once knew and were attached to the poor girl's mother ——"

"I am sorry to rob you of so harmless an illusion," interrupted he, smiling; "but I have already said, I never saw her."

"Oh, you did say so! I forget all about it. Well, there was something or other that brought the families in relation, no matter what; and it must be a great satisfaction to you to see the breach restored, and through my intervention, too, for I must needs say, Sir Stafford, there are many women who would entertain a silly jealousy respecting one who once occupied the first place in their husband's esteem."

"Must I once more assure you that this whole assumption is groundless; that I never ——"

"Quite enough—more than I ask for—more than I have any right to ask for," broke she in. "If you did not interrupt me—and pardon me if I say that this habit of yours is calculated to produce innumerable misconceptions—I say, that if I had not been interrupted, I would have told you that I regard such jealousies as most mean and unworthy. We cannot be the arbiters of our affections any more than of our fortunes; and if in early life we may have formed attachments, imprudent attachments,"—here her Ladyship, who had unwittingly glided from the consideration of Sir Stafford's case to that of her own, became confused and flurried, her cheek flushing and her chest heaving; she looked overwhelmed with embarrassment, and it was only after a long struggle to regain the lost clue to her discourse she could falteringly say, "Don't you agree with me? I'm sure you agree with me."

"I'm certain I should, if I only understood you aright," said he, good-naturedly, and by his voice and look at once reassuring her.

"Well, so far, all is settled," said she, rising from her chair; "and now for this letter; I conclude, the sooner it be done the better. When may we hope to get away from this dreary place?"

"Grounsell tells me, by Friday or Saturday next I shall be able for the journey."

"If it had not been to provoke me, I'm certain he would have pronounced you quite well ten days ago."

"You forget, Hester, my own sensations—not to say sufferings—could scarcely deceive me."

"On the contrary, Doctor Clarus assured me there is nothing in the world so very deceptive; that pain is only referred to the diseased part by the brain, and has no existence whatever, and that there is no such thing as pain at all. He explained it perfectly; and I understood it at the time. He is *so* clever, Doctor Clarus, and gives one such insi-

into the nature of their malady, that it really becomes quite interesting to be ill under his care. I remember when William, the footman, broke his arm, Clarus used to see him every day; and to show that no union, as it is called, could take place so long as motion continued, he would gently grate the fractured ends of the bone together."

"And was William convinced of the no-pain doctrine?" cried Sir Stafford, his cheek flashing with momentary anger.

"The ignorant creature actually screamed out every time he was touched; but Clarus said it would take at least two centuries to conquer the prejudices of the common people."

"Not improbable either!" said Sir Stafford.

"Dear me, how very late it is," cried she, suddenly; "and we dine at six!" And with a graceful motion of the hand she said, "Bye! bye!" and left the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "SAAL" OF "THE RUSSIE."

HAS the observant reader ever remarked a couple of persons parading the deck of a ship at sea—walking step for step through half a day, turning with the same short jerk, to resume the same short path, and yet never interchanging a word; the rhythm of the foot-fall the only tie of companionship between them. They halt occasionally, too, to look over the bulwarks, at some white sail far away, or some cloud-bank rising from the horizon; mayhap they linger to watch the rolling porpoises as they pass, or the swift nautilus, as he glides along; but yet never a sound nor token of mutual intelligence escapes them. It is enough that they live surrounded by the same influences, breathe the same air, and step in the same time; they have their separate thoughts, wide, perhaps, as the poles asunder, and yet by some strange magnetism they feel there is a kind of sociality in their speechless intercourse.

From some such cause, perhaps, it was that Colonel Haggerstone and Jekyl took their accustomed walk in the dreary dining-room of the "Hotel de Russie." The evening was cold and cheerless, as on that when first we met them there—a drifting rain, mingled with sleet, beat against the windows, and the wind, in mournful cadences, sighed along the dreary and deserted corridors. It was a comfortless scene within doors and without. A chance glance through the window—an occasional halt, to listen when the thunder rolled louder and nearer, showed

few contingencies of the case have escaped me; and [illegible] on to each; but you once knew and were attached to the poor gi[illegible] between them, as

"I am sorry to rob you of so harmless a[illegible] smiling; "but I have already said, I never sa[illegible] Haggerstone, as he

"Oh, you did say so! I forget all abo[illegible] essed his hat more thing or other that brought the familie[illegible] this in England?" and it must be a great satisfaction to y[illegible] nate!" said Jekyl, with one through my intervention, too, for I [illegible] caressed himself when he are many women who would entert[illegible] slight access of self-satis- once occupied the first place in t[illegible]

"Must I once more assure y[illegible] re, Sir, I promise you," rejoined less; that I never ——"

"Quite enough—more th[illegible] indeed, sore drawbacks upon ask for," broke she in.

me if I say that this ha[illegible] allude to our insolent, overbearing misconceptions—I say [illegible] people as they are, recruited from the told you that I r[illegible] upon the really ancient blood of the We cannot be the [illegible] Who are they, Sir, that treat us thus? The tunes; and if in [illegible] amassed a million; the Attorney-General, attachments,"— [illegible] ustreship; men without ancestry, without consideration [illegible] Banker, perhaps, like our friend up-stairs, may and flurried. [illegible] morrow or next day, as Baron or Viscount, whelmed w[illegible] ment of the station, save his money."

regain th[illegible] weakness, it is for Lords," said Jekyl, simper- you a[illegible] must have caught it very early in life, for it clings

"[illegible]

na[illegible] now that I have none, Sir. Six centuries of gentry [illegible] my ambitions; but I boil over when I see the [illegible] mption of these new people."

[illegible] people, like a new watch, a new coat, and a new [illegible] best chance of lasting. Old and worn out are very [illegible] terms."

[illegible] sentiments, Sir, which would, doubtless, do you excellent [illegible] family up-stairs, but are quite thrown away upon such a [illegible] gentleman as myself."

[illegible] and drew up his cravat, with his habitual simpering air, [illegible] ching.

[illegible] purpose remaining much longer here?" asked Haggerstone,

[illegible]

[illegible] days, at most."

[illegible] you turn north or south?"

[illegible] I shall winter in Italy."

slows, I believe, are bound for Rome?"

" was the short reply.

f people for Italy. The fashionables, of what the hop," go down admirably at Rome or Naples."

hey are, too," said Jekyl, with a smile. "The ing—even dubious intimacies."

a short "Ha!" at the heresy of this speech, but ment on it.

that Miss Onslow will have about a hundred thousand said Haggerstone, with an air of inquiry.

a deal of maccaroni and parmesan that sum would buy!"

"Would you have her marry an Italian, Sir?"

"Perhaps not, if she were to consult me on the matter," said Jekyl, blandly; "but as this is, to say the least, not very probable, I may own that I like the mixed marriages well enough."

"They make miserable 'ménages,' Sir," broke in Haggerstone.

"But excessively agreeable houses to visit at."

"The Onslows are scarcely the people to succeed in that way," rejoined Haggerstone, whose thoughts seemed to revolve round this family without any power to wander from the theme. "Mere money, nothing but money to guide them."

"Not a bad pilot either, as times go."

Haggerstone uttered another short "Ha!" as though to enter a protest against the sentiment without the trouble of a refutation. He had utterly failed in all his efforts to draw Jeykl into a discussion of the Banker's family, or even obtain from that excessively cautious young gentleman the slightest approach to an opinion about them; and yet it was exactly in search of this opinion that he had come down to take his walk that evening. It was in the hope that Jekyl might afford him some clue to these people's thoughts, or habits, or their intentions for the coming winter, that he had promenaded for the last hour and a half. "If he knew anything of them," thought Haggerstone, "he will be but too proud to show it, and display the intimacy to its fullest extent!"

It was, then, to his utter discomfiture he learned that Jekyl had scarcely spoken to Lady Hester, and never even seen Sir Stafford or Miss Onslow. It was, then, pure invention of the waiter to say that they were acquainted. "Jekyl has done nothing," muttered he to himself, "and I suppose I need not throw away a dinner upon him to tell it."

Such were his reasonings; and long did he balance in his own mind whether it were worth while to risk a bottle of Burgundy in such a cause; for often does it happen that the fluid thrown down the pump is

utterly wasted, and that it is vain to moisten the sucker, if the well beneath be exhausted!

To be, or not to be, was then the eventful point he deliberated with himself. Haggerstone never threw away a dinner in his life. He was not one of those vulgarly-minded folk who ask you, in a parenthesis, to come in to "manger la soupe," as they say, without more preparation than the spreading of your napkin. No; he knew all the importance of a dinner, and, be it acknowledged, how to give it also, and could have distinguished perfectly between the fare to set before a "habitual diner out," and that suitable to some newly arrived Englishman abroad: he could have measured his guest to a truffle! It was his boast that he never gave a pheasant when a poulet would have sufficed, nor wasted his "Chablis" on the man who would have been contented with "Barsac."

The difficulty was not, then, how to have treated Jekyl, but whether to treat him at all. Indeed, the little dinner itself had been all planned and arranged that morning; and the "trout" from the "Moorg," and the grouse from Eberstein, had been "pricked off," in the bill of fare, for "No. 24," as he was unceremoniously designated, with a special order about the dish of whole truffles with butter, in the fair intention of inviting Mr. Albert Jekyl to partake of them.

If a lady reveals some latent desire of conquest in the coquetry of her costume and the more than ordinary care of her appearance, so your male friend may be suspected of a design upon your confidence or your liberality by the studious propriety of his *petit diner*. Never fall into the vulgar error that such things are mere accident. As well ascribe to chance the rotations of the seasons, or the motions of the heavenly bodies! Your *printanière* in January—your *épigramme d'agneau* with asparagus, at Christmas, show a solicitude to please to the full as ardent, and not a whit less sincere, than the soft glances that have just set your heart a-beating from the recesses of yonder opera-box.

"Will you eat your cutlet with me to-day, Mr. Jekyl?" said Haggerstone, after a pause, in which he had weighed long and well all the pros and cons of the invitation.

"Thanks, but I dine with the Onslows!" lisped out Jekyl, with a languid indifference, that however did not prevent his remarking the almost incredulous amazement in the Colonel's face; "and I perceive," added he, "that it's time to dress."

Haggerstone looked after him as he left the room; and then ringing the bell violently, gave orders to his servant to "pack up," for he would leave Baden next morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FAMILY DISCUSSION.

SOMETHING more than a week after the scenes we have last related had occurred, the Daltons were seated around the fire, beside which, in the place of honour, in an old arm-chair, propped by many a cushion, reclined Hans Roëckle. A small lamp of three burners—such as the peasants use—stood upon the table, of which only one was lighted, and threw its fitful gleam over the board, covered by the materials of a most humble meal. Even this was untasted; and it was easy to mark in the downcast and depressed countenances of the group, that some deep care was weighing upon them.

Dalton himself, with folded arms, sat straight opposite the fire, his heavy brows closely knit, and his eyes staring fixedly at the blaze, as if expecting some revelation of the future from it; an open letter, which seemed to have dropped from his hand, was lying at his feet. Nelly, with bent-down head, was occupied in arranging the little tools and implements she was accustomed to use in carving; but in the tremulous motion of her fingers, and the short, quick heaving of her chest, might be read the signs of a struggle that cost heavily to subdue.

Half-concealed beneath the projection of the fireplace sat Kate Dalton—she was sewing; although to all seeming intent upon her work, more than once did her fingers drop the needle to wipe the gushing tears from her eyes, while at intervals a short sob would burst forth, and break the stillness around.

As for Hans, he seemed lost in a dreamy reverie, from which he rallied at times to smile pleasantly at a little wooden figure—the same which occasioned his disaster—placed beside him.

There was an air of sadness over everything; and even the old spaniel, Joan, as she retreated from the heat of the fire, crept with stealthy step beneath the table, as if respecting the mournful stillness of the scene. How different the picture from what that humble chamber had so often presented! What a contrast to those happy evenings, when, as the girls worked, Hans would read aloud some of those strange mysteries of Jean Paul, or the wild and fanciful imaginings of Chamisso, while old Dalton would lay down his pipe and break in upon his memories of Ireland, to ask at what they were laughing, and Frank look up distractedly from his old chronicles of German war to join in the

utterly wasted, and that it is vain to moisten t'
beneath be exhausted!

To be, or not to be, was then the eventful p
himself. Haggerstone never threw away a di
not one of those vulgarly-minded folk who a
come in to "manger la soupe," as they sa
than the spreading of your napkin. No:
of a dinner, and, be it acknowledged, hov
distinguished perfectly between the fare
out," and that suitable to some newl
could have measured his guest to
never gave a pheasant when a poule
"Chablis" on the man who would

The difficulty was not, then, h alley
to treat him at all. Indeed, th beneath
and arranged that morning; of life faded
the grouse from Eberstein, ibibed lessons of
for "No. 24," as he was ers and sisters, who
order about the dish of wh
inviting Mr. Albert Jeky uld rob them of—the first

If a lady reveals som —would seem better fortune,
her costume and the m traveller in the fable—who had
male friend may be the storm, but who threw it away
liberality by the stud ey could brave the hurricane, but
the vulgar error th
chance the rotati the door struck nine, and Dalton
bodies! Your p
asparagus, at C asked he, quickly.
and not a whit in a low voice.
heart a-beatin come for the answer?"

"Will yo ower.
gerstone, aft t at once," said he, with a peevishness very
pros and co manner; "they've remained here already

"Thank ays she says—to give us time to make up our
languid in them any longer."
almost in every consideration for our difficulty," said
add grateful for her kindness."

Hag bitterly. "I suppose women know when to

to make, Sir?" said she, calmly, as, having
her place at the writing-table.

" said he, doggedly. "Nor is it much matter

ı nobody now; I have no right to decide upon

ours, Papa."

duty as well as the rest!" said he,

some others might remember

heart dictates them," said

the words.

uty, with all the drilling and dic-

But this I know; there's no will

ie or that, without leave."

urself, if not to me."

g?" continued he, his anger rising with

One day I'm forbid to ask my friends home

ther, I'm told I oughtn't to go dine with *them*.

d at every hand's turn. Never a thought crosses

e wrong. You din into my ears, how happy it is to

s contented."

was yours, dear Papa," said Nelly, smiling. "Don't

r own teaching."

the more fool me. I know better now. But what's the use

When the prospect of a little ease and comfort was offered to

you persuaded me to refuse it. Ay, that you did! You began

h the old story about our happy hearth and contentment; and where is it now?"

A sob, so low as to be scarcely heard, broke from Nelly, and she pressed her hand to her heart with a convulsive force.

"Can you deny it? You made me reject the only piece of kindness ever was shown me in a life long. There was the opportunity of spending the rest of my days in peace, and you wouldn't let me take it. And the fool I was to listen to you!"

"Oh, Papa, how you wrong her!" cried Kate, as, in a torrent of tears, she bent over his chair. Dearest Nelly has no thought but for us. Her whole heart is our own."

"If you could but see it!" cried Nelly, with a thick utterance.

"'Tis a droll way of showing affection, then," said Dalton, "to keep *me* a beggar, and *you* no better than a servant-maid. It's little matter about *me*, I know. I'm old, and worn out—a reduced Irish gentleman, with nothing but his good blood remaining to him. But *you*, Kate, that are young and handsome—ay, faith! a deal sight better looking than my Lady herself—it's a little hard that you are to be denied what might be your whole fortune in life."

"You surely would not stake all her happiness on the venture, Papa?" said Nelly, mildly.

"Happiness!" said he, scornfully; "what do you call happiness? Is it dragging out life in poverty, like this, with the proudest friend in our list an old toy-maker?"

"Poor Hanserl!" murmured Nelly, in a low voice; but, soft as were the accents, the Dwarf heard them, and nodded his head twice, as though to thank her for a recognition, of whose import he knew nothing.

"Just so! You have pity enough for strangers, but none for your own people," said Dalton, as he arose and paced the room, the very act of motion serving to increase his anger. "He was never used to better; he's just what he always was. But think of *me!* think of the expectations I was reared to, the place I used to hold, and see me now!"

"Dearest, best Papa, do not say those bitter words," cried Kate, passionately. "Our own dear Nelly loves us truly. What has her life been but self-denial?"

"And have I not had my share of self-denial?" said he, abruptly. "Is there left a single one of the comforts I was always accustomed to? 'Tis sick I am of hearing about submission, and patience, and resignation, and the like, and that we never were so happy as now. Faith! I tell you, I'd rather have one day at Mount Dalton, as it used to be long ago, than I'd have twenty years of the life I spend here."

"No, Papa, no," said Nelly, winding her arm around his waist; "you'd rather sit at the window yonder, and listen to a song from Kate — one of your own favourites — or take a stroll with us after sunset of a summer's evening, and talk of Frank, than go back to all the gaiety of that wild life you speak of."

"Who says so?" asked he, roughly.

"You, yourself. Nay, don't deny it," said she, smiling.

"If I did, I was wrong, then," rejoined he, pushing her rudely away. "It was because I believed my children were affectionate and fond, and that whatever I set my heart on they'd be sure to wish just as much as myself."

"And when has that time ceased to be?" said she, calmly.

"What!—when has it ceased to be?" said he, sharply. "Is it you that asks that question—you that made me refuse the legacy?"

"Nay, Papa, be just," interrupted she, mildly. "The merit of that refusal was all your own. I did but explain to you the circumstances under which this gift, it was no less, was offered, and your own right feeling dictated the reply."

Dalton was silent. A struggling sense of pride in his imputed dignity of behaviour warring with the desire of fault-finding.

"Maybe, I did!" said he, at last, self-esteem gaining the mastery. "Maybe, I saw my own reasons for what I was going to do. A Dalton is not the man to mistake what's due to his name and family; but this is a different case. Here's an invitation, as elegant a piece of politeness as I have seen, from one our own equal in every respect; she calls herself a connexion too—we won't say much about that, for we never reckoned the English relations anything—asking my daughter to join them in their visit to Italy. When are we to see the like of that again? Is it every day that some rich family will make us the same offer? It's not to cost us a sixpence; read the letter, and you'll see how nicely it's hinted, that her Ladyship takes everything upon herself. Well, if any one objected it might be myself; 'tis on me will fall the heaviest part of the blow. It was only the other day Frank left me; now I'm to lose Kate; not but I know very well Nelly will do her best."

Slight as was the praise, she kissed his hand passionately for it; and it was some seconds ere he could proceed.

"Yes, I'm sure you'll do all you can; but what is it after all? Won't I miss the songs she sings for me?—won't I miss her laughing voice and her sprightly step?"

"And why should you encounter such privations, Papa?" broke Nelly in. "These are, as you justly say, the greatest sources of your happiness. Why separate from them? Why rob this humble chamber of its fairest ornament? Why darken our hearth by an absence for which nothing can requite us?"

"I'll tell you why, then," said he, and a sparkling gleam of cunning lit up his eye, as the casuistry crossed his mind. "Just because I can deny myself anything for my children's sake. 'Tis for them I am thinking always. Give old Peter Dalton his due, and nobody can call him selfish; not the worst enemy ever he had! Let me feel that my children are benefited, and you may leave me to trudge along the weary path before me."

"Then, there only remains to see if this promise of benefit be real," said Nelly.

"And why wouldn't it? Doesn't everybody know that travelling and seeing foreign parts is equal to any education How many things hav'n't I seen myself since I came abroad, that I never dreamed about before I left home! Look at the way they dress the peas—with sugar in them. See how they shoe a horse—with a leg tied up to a post, as if they were going to cut it off. Mind the droll fashion they have of

fastening a piece of timber to the hind wheel of a coach, by way of a drag! There's no end to their contrivances."

"Let us forget every consideration but one," said Nelly, earnestly. "What are the dangers that may beset Kate, in a career of such difficulty, when, without an adviser, miles away from us all, she may need counsel or comfort. Think of her in sickness or in sorrow, or, worse than both, under temptation. Picture to yourself, how dearly bought would be every charm of that refinement you covet for her, at the price of a heart weakened in its attachment to home, bereft of the simple faith that there was no disgrace in poverty. Think, above all," cried she,—and for the first time her lips trembled, and her eyes swam—"think, above all, we cannot give her up for ever; and yet how is she to come back again to these humble fortunes, and the daily toil that she will then regard with shame and disgust. I ask not how differently shall we appear in her eyes, for I know that, however changed her habits, how wide soever be the range of thought knowledge may have imparted, her fond, true heart will still be all our own; but can you risk her fortunes on an ocean like this?—can you peril all her future for so little?"

"To hear you talk, Nelly, one might think she was going to Jerusalem or Australia; sure, after all, it's only a few days away from us she'll be, and as for the dangers, devil a one of them I see. Peter Dalton's daughter is not likely to be ill-treated anywhere. We were always a 'good warrant' for taking care of our own; and to make short of it, I wish it, and Kate herself wishes it; and I don't see why our hopes should not be as strong as your fears."

"You remember, too, Papa, that Doctor Grounsell agreed with me, and spoke even more strongly than I did against the scheme."

"And didn't I pay him off for his interference? Didn't I give him a bit of my mind about it, and tell him that, because a man was employed as a doctor in a family that he ought not to presume to advise them on their own affairs? Faith, I don't think he'll trouble another patient with his counsel."

"We must not forget, Sir, that if his counsel came unasked, his skill was unrequited; both came from a nature that wished us well."

"The advice and the physic were about the same value; both made me sick; and so you're like to do if you worry me any longer. I tell you now, my mind's made up, and go she shall!"

"Oh, Papa, not if dear Nelly thinks ——"

"What's that to me; don't I know more of the world than she does! Am I come to this time of life to be taught by a slip of a girl that never was ten miles out of her home. Sit down there now, and write the answer."

There was a stern determination in the way these last words were uttered, that told Nelly how fruitless would be all further opposition. She had long since remarked, besides, how her father's temper reacted upon his health, and how invariably any prolonged excitement terminated in an attack of gout. Increasing age gave to these accesses of malady a character of danger, which she already began to remark with deep anxiety. Now she saw that immediate compliance with his wishes was the only alternative left.

She seated herself at the table, and prepared to write. For some seconds the disturbance of her thoughts, the mingled crowd of sensations that filled her mind, prevented all power of calm consideration; but the struggle was soon over, and she wrote on rapidly.

So silent was the chamber, so hushed was all within it, that the scratching noise of the pen alone broke the stillness. Speedily glided her hand across the paper, on which two heavy tears had already fallen—burning drops of sorrow that gushed from a fevered brain! A whole world of disaster, a terrible catalogue of ill, revealed itself before her; but she wrote on. She felt that she was to put in motion the series of events whose onward course she never could control, as though she was to push over a precipice the rock that in its downward rush would carry ruin and desolation along with it; but she wrote on.

At last she ceased, and all was still; not a sound was heard in the little room, and Nelly leaned her head down upon the table and wept.

But while she wept, she prayed,—prayed, that if the season of trouble her thoughts foreshadowed should be inevitable, and that if the cup of sorrow must, indeed, be drained, that strength might be sent them for the effort. It might have been that her mind exaggerated the perils of separation, and the dangers that would beset one of Kate's temper and disposition. Her own bereavement might have impressed her with the misery that follows an unhappy attachment; and her reflective nature, shadowed by an early sorrow, might have coloured too darkly a future of such uncertainty. But a deep foreboding, like a heavy weight, lay upon her heart, and she was powerless to resist it.

These instincts of our nature are not to be undervalued, nor confounded with the weak and groundless terrors of the frivolous. The closing petals of the flower as the storm draws nigh, the wild cry of the sea-bird as the squall is gathering, the nestling of the sheep within the fold while yet the hurricane has not broke,—are signs, that, to the observant instincts, peril comes not unannounced.

"Shall I read it, Papa?" said she, as she raised her head, and turned towards him a look of calm and beaming affection.

"You needn't," said he, roughly. "Of course, its full of all the

elegant phrases women like to cheat each other with. You said she will go; that's enough."

Nelly tried to speak, but the words would not come, and she merely nodded an acquiescence.

"And, of course, too, you told her Ladyship that if it wasn't to a near relation of the family,—one that had a kind of a right, as I may say, to ask her,—that I'd never have given my consent. Neither would I!"

"I said that you could give no higher proof of your confidence in Lady Hester's goodness and worth, than in committing to her charge all that we hold so dear. I spoke of our gratitude," her voice faltered here, and she hesitated for a second or so; our gratitude!—strange word to express the feeling with which we part from what we cling to so fondly! —"and I asked of her to be the mother of her who had none!"

"Oh, Nelly, I cannot go,—I cannot leave you!" burst out Kate, as she knelt down, and buried her head in her sister's lap. "I feel already how weak and unable I am to live among strangers, away from you and dear Papa. I have need of you both!"

"May I never leave this spot if you're not enough to drive me mad!" exclaimed Dalton. "You cried two nights and a day because there was opposition to your going. You fretted till your eyes were red, and your cheeks all furrowed with tears; and now that you get leave to go,—now that I consent to—to—to sacrifice,—ay, to sacrifice my domestic enjoyments to your benefit,—you turn short round and say you won't go."

"Nay, nay, Papa," said Nelly, mildly; "Kate but owns with what fears she would consent to leave us, and in this shows a more fitting mind to brave what may come, than if she went forth with a heart brimful of its bright anticipations, and only occupied with a future of splendour and enjoyment."

"I ask you again, is it into the back woods of Newfoundland—is it into the deserts of Arabia she's going?" said Dalton, ironically.

"The country before her has perils to the full as great, if not greater than either," rejoined Nelly, lowly.

"There's a ring at the bell," said Dalton, perhaps not sorry to cut short a discussion in which his own doubts and fears were often at variance with his words; for while opposing Nelly with all his might, he was frequently forced to coincide secretly with that he so stoutly resisted. Vanity alone rose above every other motive, and even hardened his heart against separation and absence from his favourite child. Vanity to think that *his* daughter would be the admired beauty in the *salons* of the great and highly-born—that she would be daily moving in a rank the most exalted—that his dear Kate would be the attraction of courts—

the centre of adulation wherever she went. So blinded was he by false reasoning, that he actually fancied himself a martyr to his daughter's future advancement, and that this inveterate egotism was a high and holy self-denial! "My worst enemy never called me selfish," was the balm that he ever laid on his chafed spirit, and always with success. It would, however, have been rather the part of friend, than of enemy, to have whispered that selfishness was the very bane and poison of his nature. It was his impulse in all the wasteful extravagance of his early life. It was his motive in all the struggles of his adversity. To sustain a mock rank—to affect a mock position—to uphold a mock standard of gentility, he was willing to submit to a thousand privations of his children and himself; and to gratify a foolish notion of family pride, he was ready to endure anything—even to separation from all he held dearest.

"Lady Hester's Courier has come for the answer to her note, Papa," said Nelly, twice over, before Dalton heard her, for he was deep sunk in his own musings.

"Let him come in and have a glass of wine," said Dalton. "I'd like to ask him a few questions about these people."

"Oh, Papa!" whispered Nelly, in a tone at once so reproachful, that the old man coloured and looked away.

"I meant about what time they were to start on the journey," said he, confusedly.

"Lady Hester told us they should leave this to-morrow, Sir."

"Short notice for us. How is Kate to have all her clothes packed, and everything arranged? I don't think that is treating us with much respect, Nelly."

"They have waited four days for our decision, Papa—remember that."

"Aye, to be sure. I was forgetting that; and she came every day to press the matter more and more; and there was no end to the note-writing besides. I must say that nothing could beat their politeness. It was a mighty nice attention, the old man coming himself to call here; and a fine hale good-looking man he is! a better figure than ever his son will be. I don't much like Mr. George, as they call him."

"Somewhat colder, and more reserved I think, than the other," said Nelly. "But about this answer, Papa?"

"What a hurry they're in. Is it a return to a writ, that they must press for it this way? Well, well, I ought to be used to all manner of interruptions and disturbances by this time. Fetch me a candle, till I seal it;" and he sighed, as he drew forth his old-fashioned watch, to which by a massive steel chain the great family seal was attached, firmly persuaded that in the simple act he was about to perform, he was achieving a mighty labour, at the cost of much fatigue. "No rest for the wicked! as my old father used to say," muttered he, in a happy

ignorance whether the philosophy emanated from his parent, or from some higher authority. "One would think that at my time of life a man might look for a little peace and ease; but Peter Dalton hasn't such luck! Give me the letter," said he, querulously. "There is Peter Dalton's hand and seal—his act and will," muttered he, with a half-solemnity, as he pressed the wax with his heavy signet. "'*Semper eadem;*' there's the ancient motto of our house, and faith I believe Counsellor O'Shea was right, when he translated it 'The devil a better!'"

He read the address two or three times over to himself, as if there was something pleasurable in the very look of the words, and then he turned his glance towards Hans, as in a dreamy half-consciousness he sat still, contemplating the little statue of Margarete.

"Isn't it droll to think we'd be writing to the first in the land, and an old toymaker sitting beside the fire all the time," said Dalton, as he shook his head thoughtfully, in the firm conviction that he had uttered a very wise and profound remark. "Well—well—well! Life is a queer thing!"

"Is it not stranger still, that we should have won the friendship of poor Hanserl, than have attracted the notice of Lady Hester," said Nelly. "Is it not a prouder thought that we have drawn towards us from affectionate interest the kindness that has no touch of condescension?"

"I hope you are not comparing the two," said Dalton, angrily. "What's the creature muttering to himself?"

"It's Gretchen's song he's trying to remember," said Kate.

"Nach ihm nur schau' ich
Zum Fenster hinaus!"

said Hans, in a low, distinct voice. "'Was kommt nach,'—what comes next, Fräulein?"

"You must ask sister Nelly, Hanserl," said Kate; but Nelly was standing behind the massive stove, her face covered with her hands.

"'Zum Fenster hinaus,'" repeated he, slowly; "and, then, Fräulein? and then?"

"Tell him, Nelly; tell him what follows."

"Nach ihm nur schau' ich
Zum Fenster hinaus;
Nach ihm nur geh' ich
Aus dem Haus!"

repeated she.

"Ja, ja!" cried Hans, delightedly—

"Nach ihm nur geh' ich
Aus dem Haus!"

"What does that mean?" said Dalton, with impatience.

"It's Gretchen's song, Papa," said Nelly—

"His figure I gaze on,
O'er and o'er;
His step I follow
From the door!"

"I hope it isn't in love the creature is," said Dalton; and he laughed heartily at the conceit, turning at the same time his look from the Dwarf, to bestow a most complacent glance at the remains of his own once handsome stature. "Oh, dear! oh, dear!" sighed he; "isn't it wonderful, but there isn't a creth or a cripple that walks the earth that hasn't a sweetheart!"

A cough, purposely loud enough to announce his presence, here came from the Courier in the ante-chamber, and Dalton remembered that the letter had not yet been despatched.

"Give it to him, Nelly," said he, curtly.

She took the letter in her hand, but stood for a second or two as if powerless to move.

"Must it be so, dearest Papa," said she, and the words almost choked her utterance.

Dalton snatched the letter from her fingers, and left the room. His voice was heard for an instant in conversation with the Courier, and the moment after the door banged heavily, and all was still.

"It is done, Kate!" said she, throwing her arms around her sister's neck. "Let us now speak of the future; we have much to say, and short time to say it; and first let us help poor Hans down stairs."

The Dwarf, clutching up the wooden image, suffered himself to be aided with all the submissiveness of a patient child, and, with one at either side of him, slowly crept down the stairs to his own chamber. Disengaging himself by a gentle effort as he gained his door, Hans removed his cap from his head and made a low and deep obeisance to each of the girls separately, while he bade them a good night.

"Leb wohl, Hanserl, Leb wohl!" said Kate, taking his hand affectionately. "Be ever the true friend that thou hast proved hitherto, and let me think of thee, when far away, with gratitude."

"Why this? How so, Fräulein?" said Hans, anxiously; why "farewell? why sayst thou Leb wohl, when it is 'but good night?'"

"Kate is about to leave us for a short space," said Nelly, affecting to appear at ease and calm. "She is going to Italy, Hanserl."

"Das schöne Land! that lovely land," muttered he, over and over. "Dahin, dahin," cried he, pointing with his finger to the southward, "where the gold orange blooms. There would I wander, too."

"You'll not forget me, Hanserl," said the young girl, kindly.

"Over the great Alps and away!" said Hans, still talking to himself; "over the high snow peaks which cast their shadows on our cold land, but have terraces for the vine and olive-garden, yonder! Thou'lt leave us, then, Fräulein?"

"But for a little while, Hans, to come back afterwards and tell thee all I have seen."

"They come not back from the sunshine to the shade," said Hans, solemnly. "Thou'lt leave not the palace for the peasant's hut; but think of us, Fräulein, think sometimes, when the soft sirocco is playing through thy glossy hair—when sounds of music steal over thy senses among the orange groves, and near the shadows of old temples—think of this simple Fatherland and its green valleys. Think of them with whom thou wert so happy, too! Splendour thou mayst have—it is thy beauty's right; but be not proud, Fraulein. Remember what Chamisso tells us, 'Das Noth lehrt beten,' 'Want teaches Prayer,' and to that must thou come, however high thy fortune."

"Kate will be our own wherever she be," said Nelly, clasping her sister affectionately to her side.

"Bethink thee well, Fräulein, in thy wanderings, that the great and the beautiful are brethren of the good and the simple. The cataract and the dewdrop are kindred! Think of all that teachest thee to think of home; and remember well, that when thou losest the love of this humble hearth thou art in peril. If to any of thy childish toys thou sayst, 'Ich liebe dich nicht mehr,' then art thou changed indeed." Hans sate down upon his little bed as he spoke, and covered his face with his hands.

Nelly watched him silently for a few seconds, and then with a gentle hand closed the door and led Kate away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CARES AND CROSSES.

THE lamp in Kate Dalton's chamber was still burning, when the morning dawned, and by its uncertain flicker might be seen the two sisters, who, clasped in each other's arms, sat upon the low settle-bed. Nelly, pale and motionless, supported Kate, as, overcome by watching and emotion, she had fallen into a heavy slumber. Not venturing to stir, lest she should awaken her, Nelly had leaned against the wall for support, and in her unmoved features and deathly pallor, seemed like some monumental figure of sorrow.

It was not alone the grief of an approaching separation that oppressed her; sad as it was to part from one to whom she had been mother and sister too, her affliction was tinged with a deeper colouring in her fears for the future. Loving Kate dearer than anything in the world, she was alive to all the weak traits of her character; her credulity—her trustfulness—her fondness for approbation even from those whose judgments she held lightly—her passion for admiration even in trifles—were well known to her; and while, perhaps, these very failings, like traits of childish temperament, had actually endeared her the more to Nelly, she could not but dread their effect when they came to be exercised in the world of strangers.

Not that Nelly could form the very vaguest conception of what that world was like. Its pleasures and its perils, its engagements and hazards, were all unknown to her. It had never been even the dream-land of her imagination. Too humble in spirit, too lowly by nature to feel companionship with the great and titled, she had associated all her thoughts with those whose life is labour; with them were all her sympathies. There was a simple beauty in the unchanging fortune of the peasant's life—such as she had seen in the Schwarzwald, for instance—that captivated her. That peaceful domesticity was the very nearest approach to happiness, to her thinking, and she longed for the day when her father might consent to the obscurity and solitude of some nameless "Dorf" in the dark recesses of that old forest. With Frank and Kate such a lot would have been a paradise. But one was already gone, and she was now to lose the other, too. "Strange turn of fortune," as she said, "that prosperity should be more cruel than adversity. In our days of friendless want and necessity we held together; it is only when the promise of brighter destinies is dawning that we separate."

"It is but selfishness after all," thought she, "to wish for an existence like this; such humble and lowly fortunes might naturally enough become 'lame Nelly,' but Frank, the high-hearted, daring youth, with ambitious hopes and soaring aspirations, demands another and a different sphere of action; and Kate, whose attractions would grace a court, might well sorrow over a lot of such ignoble obscurity. What would not my sorrow and self-reproach be if I saw, that, in submitting to the same monotony of this quietude, they should have become wearied and careless—neither taking pleasure in the simple pastimes of the people, nor stooping to their companionship, and thus all may be for the best," said she, half aloud, "if I could but feel courage to think so. We may each of us be but following his true road in life."

A long intimacy with affliction will very frequently be found to impress even a religiously-disposed mind with a strong tinge of fatalism.

The apparent hopelessness of all effort to avert calamity, or stem the tide of evil fortune, often suggests, as its last consolation, the notion of a predetermined destiny, to which we are bound to submit with patient trustfulness; a temperament of great humility aids this conviction. Both of these conditions were Nelly's; she had "supped sorrow" from her cradle, while her estimate of herself was the very lowest possible. "I suppose it is so," said she again, "all is for the best."

She already pictured to herself the new spring this change of fortune would impart to her father's life—with what delight he would read the letters from his children—how he would once more, through them, taste of that world whose pleasures he was so fondly attached to. "*I* never could have yielded him a gratification like this," said Nelly, as the tears rose in her eyes. "I am but the image of our fallen fortunes, and in me, 'poor lame Nelly,' he can but see reflected our ruined lot. All is for the best, it must be so," sighed she, heavily; and just as the words escaped, her father, with noiseless step, entered the chamber.

"To be sure, it is Nelly, darling," said he, as he sat down near her, "and glad I am that you've come to reason at last. 'Tis plain enough this isn't the way the Daltons ought to be passing their life in a little hole of a place without society or acquaintance of any kind. You and I may bear it, not but its mighty hard upon me sometimes, too; but Kate there, just look at her and say, is it a girl like that should be wasting away her youth in a dreary village? Lady Hester tells me, and sure nobody should know better, that there never was the time in the world when real beauty had the same chance as now, and I'd like to see the girl that could stand beside her. Do you know, Nelly," here he drew closer, so as to speak in a whisper—"do you know that I do be fancying the strangest things might happen to us yet—that Frank might be a great General, and Kate married to, God knows what sort of a grandee, with money enough to redeem Mount Dalton, and lay my old bones in the churchyard with my ancestors! I can't get it out of my head, but it will come about somehow. What do you think yourself?"

"I'm but an indifferent castle-builder, Papa," said she, laughing softly. "I rarely attempt anything beyond a peasant-hut or a shealing!"

"And nobody could make the one or the other more neat and comfortable, that I'll say for you, Nelly. It would have a look of home about it before you were a day under the roof!"

The young girl blushed deeply; for, humble as the praise might have sounded to other ears, to hers it was the most touching she could have listened to.

"I'm not flattering you a bit. 'Tis your own mother you take after; you might put her down in the bleakest spot of Ireland, and 'tis a garden

she'd make it. Let her stop for shelter in a cabin, and before the shower was over you'd not know the place. It would be all swept and clean, and the dishes ranged neatly on the dresser; and the pig—she couldn't abide a pig—turned out, and the hens driven into the cow-shed, and the children's faces washed, and their hair combed, and, maybe, the little gossoon of five years old upon her knee, saying his 'Hail, Mary,' or his 'A B C,' while she was teaching his mother how to wind the thread off the wheel, for she could spin a hank of yarn as well as any cottier's wife in the townland! The kind creature she was! But she never had a taste for real diversion; it always made her low-spirited and sad."

"Perhaps the pleasures you speak of were too dearly purchased, Papa," said Nelly.

"Indeed, maybe they were," said he, dubiously, and as though the thought had now occurred for the first time; "and now that you say it, I begin to believe it was that same that might have fretted her. The way she was brought up, too, made her think so too. That brother was always talking about wastefulness and extravagance, and so on; and, if it was in her nature, he'd have made her as stingy as himself; and look what it comes to after all. *We* spent it when we had it, the Daltons are a good warrant for that, and there was he grubbing and grabbing all his days, to leave it after him to a rich man, that doesn't know whether he has so many thousands more or not."

Nelly made no reply, not wishing to encourage, by the slightest apparent interest, the continuance on the theme, which invariably suggested her father's gloomiest reveries.

"Is that her trunk, Nelly?" said Dalton, breaking silence after a long interval, and pointing to an old and journey-worn vallise, that lay half open upon the floor.

"Yes, Papa," said Nelly, with a sigh.

"Why, it's a mean-looking, scrubby bit of a thing; sure it's not the size of a good tea-chest!" said he, angrily.

"And yet too roomy for all its contents, Papa. Poor Kate's wardrobe is a very humble one."

"I'd like to know where's the shops here; where's the milliners and the haberdashers. Are we in College Green or Grafton Street, that we can just send out and have everything at our hand's turn? 'Tisn't on myself I spend the money. Look at these gaiters; they're nine years old next March; and the coat on my back was made by Peter Stevens, that's in his grave now! The greatest enemy ever I had could not face me down that I only took care of myself. If that was my way, would I be here now? See the rag I'm wearing round my throat, a piece of old worsted like a rug, a thing——"

He stopped, and stammered, and then was silent altogether, for he suddenly remembered it was Nelly herself who had worked the article in question.

"Nay, Papa," broke she in, with her own happy smile; "you may give it to Andy to-morrow, for I've made you a smart new one, of your own favourite colours too, the Dalton green and white.

"Many a time I've seen the same colours coming in first on the Corralin course!" cried Dalton, with enthusiasm; for at the impulse of a new word his mind could turn from a topic of deep and painful interest to one in every way its opposite. "You were too young to remember it; but you were there, in the 'landau,' with your mother, when Baithershin won the Murra handicap, the finest day's flat racing—I have it from them that seen the best in England—that ever was run in the kingdom. I won eight hundred pounds on it, and, by the same token, lost it all in the evening at 'blind hookey,' with old Major Haggs, of the 5th Foot—not to say a trifle more besides. And that's her trunk!" said he, after another pause, his voice dropping at the words, as though to say, "What a change of fortune is there!" "I wonder neither of you hadn't the sense to take my old travelling-chest, that's twice the size, and as heavy as a lead coffin besides. Sorrow one would ever know if she hadn't clothes for a whole lifetime! Two men wouldn't carry it upstairs when its empty."

"When even this vallise is too large, Papa?"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" broke in Dalton; "you've no contrivance, after all. Don't you see that it's not what's inside I'm talking about at all, but the show before the world. Didn't I live at Mount Dalton with the fat of the land, and every comfort a gentleman could ask, five years and eight months after I was ruined? And hadn't I credit wherever I went, and for whatever I ordered? And why? Because of the house and place! I was like the big trunk beyond; nobody knew how little there was in it. Oh, Nelly, dear, when you've seen as much of life as me, you'll know that one must be up to many a thing for appearance' sake."

Nelly sighed, but made no reply. Perhaps in secret she thought how much trouble a little sincerity with the world would save us.

"We'll be mighty lonesome after her," said he, after a pause.

Nelly nodded her head in sadness.

"I was looking over the map last night, and it ain't so far away, after all," said Dalton. "'Tisn't much more than the length of my finger on the paper."

"Many a weary mile may lie within that space," said Nelly, softly.

"And I suppose we'll hear from her every week, at least?" said

lton, whose mind vacillated between joy and grief, but still looked for greatest consolations from without.

Poor Nelly was, however, little able to furnish these. Her mind saw thing but sorrow for the present; and, for the future, difficulty, if not nger.

"You give one no comfort at all," said Dalton, rising impatiently. That's the way it will be always now, when Kate goes. No more iety in the house—not a song nor a merry laugh! I see well what a nary life there is before me."

"Oh, dearest Papa, I'll do my very best, not to replace her, for that I ver could do, but to make your days less wearisome. It will be such asure, too, to talk of her, and think of her! to know of her happiness, d to fancy all the fair stores of knowledge she will bring back with r, when she comes home at last!"

"If I could only live to see them back again, Frank and Kate, one at ch side of me, that's all I ask for in this world now," muttered he, as stole noiselessly away, and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE ROAD.

If the arrival of a great family at a hotel be a scene of unusual bustle d excitement, with teeming speculations as to the rank and the wealth the new comers, the departure has also its interests, and even of a gher nature. In the former case all is vague, shadowy, and uncertain; e eye of the spectator wanders from the muffled figures as they descend, scrutinise the lacqueys, and even the luggage, as indicative of the angers' habits and condition; and even to the shrewd perceptions of st dread functionary—the head-waiter—the identity of the travellers sumes no higher form, nor any more tangible shape, than that they e No. 42, or 57!

When the hour of leave-taking has come, however, their characters ve become known—their tastes and habits understood, and no mean sight obtained into their prejudices, their passions, and their pursuits. he imposing old Gentleman, whose rubicund nose and white waistcoat e the guarantees for a taste in port, has already inspired the landlord th a sincere regard. "My Lady's" half-invalid caprices about diet, d air, and sunshine, have all written themselves legibly in "the bill." he tall son's champagne-score incurred of a night, and uncounted of morning, are not unrecorded virtues, while even the pale young ladies,

whose sketching propensities involved donkeys, and ponies, and picnics, go not unremembered.

Their hours of rising and retiring—their habits of society or reclusion—their preferences for the *Post* or the *Times*, have all silently been ministering to the estimate formed of them, so that in the commonest items of the hotel ledger are the materials for their history. And with what true charity are their characters weighed! How readily does mine host forgive the transgressions which took their origin in his own Burgundy—how blandly smile at the follies begotten of his Johannisberg! With what angelic temper does the hostess pardon the little liberties "young gentlemen from college *will* take!" Oh! if our dear, dear friends would but read us with half the charity, or even bestow upon our peccadilloes a tithe of this forgiveness! And why should it not be so? What are these same friends and acquaintances but guests in the same great inn which we call "the world;" and who, as they never take upon them to settle our score, need surely not trouble themselves about the "items."

While the Daltons were still occupied in the manner our last chapter has described, the "Hotel de Russie" was a scene of considerable bustle; the preparations for departure engaging every department of the household within doors and without. There were carriage-springs to be lashed with new cordage—drag-chains new tipped with steel—axles to smear—hinges to oil—imperials to buckle on—cap-cases to be secured—and then what a deluge of small articles to be stowed away in most minute recesses, and yet be always at hand when called for. Cushions and cordials, and "chauffe-pieds," and "Quarterlys," smelling-boxes, and slippers, and spectacles, and cigar-cases, journals and "John Murray's"—to be disposed of in the most convenient places. Every corridor and landing was blocked up with baggage, and the Courier wiped his forehead, and "*sacréd*" in half desperation at the mountain of trunks and portmanteaus that lay before him.

"This is not ours!" said he, as he came to a very smart vallise of lacquered leather, with the initials A. J. in brass on the top.

"No; that's Mr. Jekyl's," said Mr. George's man, Twig; "he ain't a-goin' with *you*—he travels in our britska."

"I'm more like de Conducteur of a diligence than a family Courier," muttered the other, sulkily. "I know nothing of de baggage, since we take up strangers at every stage! and always arme Teufeln—poor devils—that have not a sous en poche!"

"[illegible]t's the matter now, Mister Greg'ry," said Twig, who very im-[illegible]nderstood the other's jargon.

"[illegible]tter is, I will resign my 'fonction,'—je m'en vais—dat's all! [illegible]g besser than an 'Eil wagen' mit passengers! Fust of all

we have de Doctor, as dey call him—wid his stuff birds and beasts, his dried blumen and sticks, till de roof is like de Jardin des Plantes at Paris, and he himself like de bear in de middle; dem we have das verfluchte parroquet of milady, and Flounce, de lap-dog, that must drink every post-station, and run up all de hills for exercise! Dam! Ich bin kein Hund, and needn't run up de hills too! Mademoiselle Celestine have a what d'ye call 'Affe'—a ape! and though he be little, a reg'lar teufelchen to hide de keys and de money, when he find 'em; and dem dere is de yong lady collectin' all de stones off de road—lauter paving stones—which she smash wid a leetle hammer! Ach Gott—what is de world grow! when a Fräulein fall in love wid Felsen and Steine!"

"Monsieur Grégoire! Monsieur Grégoire!" screamed out a sharp voice from a window over head.

"Mademoiselle!" replied he, politely touching his cap to the femme-de-chambre.

"Be good enough, Monsieur Grégoire, to have my trunks taken down—there are two in the fourgon, and a cap-case on the large carriage."

"Hagel and Sturm—they are under everything. How am I ——?"

"I can't possibly say—broke she in—but it must be done!"

"Can't you wait, Mademoiselle, till we reach Basle?"

"I'm going away, Monsieur Grégoire. I'm off to Paris!" was the reply, as the speaker closed the sash and disappeared.

"What does she say?" inquired Twig, who, as this dialogue was carried on in French, was in total ignorance of its meaning.

"She have given her 'démission,'" said the Courier, pompously—"resign her portefeuille, and she have made a very bad affair!—dat's all. Your gros milor, is very often bien bête—he is very often rude, savage, forget his manners, and all dat. But,"—and here his voice swelled into the full soundness of a perfect connexion—"but he is *alway* rich. Ja—ja. Immer reich!" said he over to himself. "Allons! now to get at her verdammte baggage! de two trunks, and de leetle box, and de ape, and de sac, and de four or five baskets! Diable d'affaire! Monsieur Tig, do me the grace to mount on high, dere, and give me dat box."

"I've nothing to say to your carriage, Mister Greg'ry; I'm the Captain's Gentlemen, and never do take any but a single-handed situation;" and, with this very haughty speech, Mr. Twig lighted a fresh cigar and strolled away.

"Alle böse Teufeln holen de good for nichts," sputtered Grégoire, who now waddled into the house to seek for assistance.

Whatever apathy and indifference he might have met with from the English servants, the people of the hotel were like his bond-slaves. Old and young, men and women, the waiter and the ostler, and the chamber-

who ... ich in Ger... house-
nies ... ound of ... scullion.
Th ... mand. Nor was he an
—th ... nd indignity accompanied
mi ... lacrity by the most insult-
ire ... ficiencies.
wh ... his courier's cap set jauntily
... in his hand. Grégoire gave
... court-yard was strewn with
... size, and colour. The scene.
while each of the helpers screamed
Grégoire rejoined in shouts that
parrot gave vent to the most ter-
... him through the bars of his cage

... cried out Monsieur Grégoire, "that
... it here."
... ear Grégoire," cried Mademoiselle from

... touched his cap.
... Grégoire; the affair is arranged."
... hear it, Mademoiselle," said he, smiling in
... muttered a malediction between his teeth.
... ssion, and I forgive everything. You must
... given you."
... have made me forget it," said he, with a smile
... "Peste!" growled he, under his breath:
... whole fourgon."
... said she, sighing.
... exclaimed he, returning the leer she bestowed, and
... more closed upon her exit.
... the labour, in the hope we had done with you for
... forehead; "and la voilà—there you are—back
... that ape down; away with him, cursed beast," cried he.
... upon the minion, since he dared not attack the mistress.
... have we here?"
... exclamation was caused by the sudden entrance into the
... two porters, carrying an enormous trunk, whose iron fasten-
... massive padlock gave it the resemblance of an emigrant's sea-
... A few paces behind walked Mr. Dalton, followed again by Old
... who with a huge oil-silk umbrella under one arm, and a bundle
... hoods on the other, made his way with no small
... ficulty.

Grégoire surveyed the procession with cool amazement, and then, with a kind of mock-civility, he touched his cap, and said, "You have mistak de road, saar; de diligenz office is over de way."

"And who told you I wanted it?" said Dalton, sternly. "Maybe, I'm just where I ought to be! Isn't this Sir Stafford Onslow's coach?"

"Yes, saar; but you please to remember, it is not de 'Eil wagen.'"

"Just hold your prate, my little chap, and it will be pleasanter, and safer—ay safer, too, dy'e mind. You see that trunk there; it's to go up with the luggage, and be kept dry, for there's valuable effects inside."

"Dat is not a trunk: it is a sentry-house, a watsch-box; no gentleman's carriage ever support a ting of dat dimension!"

"It's a trunk, and belongs to me, and my name is Peter Dalton, as the letters there will show you; and so no more about it, but put it up at once."

"I have de orders about a young lady's luggage, but none about a great coffin, with iron hoops," said Grégoire, tartly.

"Be quiet, now, and do as I tell you, my little chap. Put these trifles, too, somewhere inside; and this umbrella in a safe spot; and here's a little basket, with a cold pie and a bottle of wine in it."

"Himmel und Erde! how you tink milady travel mit dass schweinerei?"

"It's not pork; 'tis mutton, and a pigeon in the middle," said Dalton, mistaking his meaning. "I brought a taste of cheese, too, but it's a trifle high, and maybe it's as well not to send it."

"Is the leetle old man to go too?" asked Grégoire, with an insolent grin, and not touching the profanation of either cheese or basket.

"That's my own servant, and he's not going," said Dalton; "and now that you know my orders, just stir yourself a little, my chap, for I'm not going to spend my time here with you."

A very deliberate stare, without uttering a word, was all the reply Grégoire returned to this speech; and then addressing himself to the helpers, he gave some orders in German about the other trunks. Dalton waited patiently for some minutes; but no marks of attention showed that the Courier even remembered his presence, and at last he said,

"I'm waiting to see that trunk put up; d'ye hear me?"

"I hear ver well, but I mind noting at all," said Grégoire, with a grin.

"Oh! that's it," said Dalton, smiling, but with a twinkle in his grey eyes, that, had the other known him better, he would scarcely have fancied. "That's it, then!" and taking the umbrella from beneath Andy's arm, he walked deliberately across the yard, to where a large tank stood, and which, fed from a small *jet-d'eau*, served as a watering-place for the post-horses. Some taper rods of ice now stood up in the midst, and a tolerably thick coating covered the surface of the basin.

maid,—and that strange species of *grande utilité*, which in German hou
holds goes by the name of "Haus-knecht"—a compound of boots, scull
porter, pimp, and drudge,—were all at his command. Nor was h
over-mild monarch; a running fire of abuse and indignity accomp
every order he gave, and he stimulated their alacrity by the most
ing allusions to their personal defects and deficiencies.

Seated upon a capacious cap-case, with his courier's cap set
on one side, his meerschaum like a sceptre in his hand, Grég
out his edicts right royally; and soon the court-yard was st
trunks, boxes, and bags, of every shape, size, and colour.
indeed, was not devoid of tumult; for, while each of the help
away at the top of his throat, and Grégoire rejoined in
would have done credit to a bull, the parrot gave vent to
rific cries and yells as the ape poked him through the b
with the handle of a parasol.

"There, that's one of them," cried out Monsieur
round box beside you; down with it here."

"Monsieur Grégoire—Monsieur Grégoire," cried M
the window once more.

The Courier looked up, and touched his cap.

"I'm not going, Monsieur Grégoire; the affair is

"Ah! I am charmed to hear it, Mademoiselle,"
seeming ecstasy, while he muttered a malediction

"Miladi has made submission, and I forgive e
pardon all the trouble I've given you."

"These happy tidings have made me forget i
that verged upon a grin. "Peste!" growled
"we'd unpacked the whole fourgon."

"Ah que vous êtes aimable!" said she, sig

"Belle tigresse!" exclaimed he, returning
the window was once more closed upon her

"I submitted to the labour, in the hop
ever!" said he, wiping his forehead; "and
again. Throw that ape down; away wit
venting his spite upon the minion, since h
"But what have we here?"

This latter exclamation was caused
court-yard of two porters, carrying an
ings and massive padlock gave it the
chest. A few paces behind walked
Andy, who, with a h
of cloaks, shawls,
difficulty.

and a cast of pale and melancholy meaning sat upon his features, for his eye rested on the little wooden bridge which crossed the stream, and where now two muffled figures were standing, that he recognised as his daughters.

They were leaning on the balustrade, and gazing at the mountain, that, covered with its dense pine wood, rose abruptly from the river side. It had been the scene of many a happy ramble in the autumn, of many a delightful excursion, when, with Frank, they used to seek for fragments of wood that suited Nelly's sculptures. How often had they carried their little basket up yonder steep path, to eat their humble supper upon the rock, from which the setting sun could be seen. There was not a cliff nor crag, not a mossy slope, not a grass bank, they did not know; and now, as they looked, all the past moments of pleasure were crowding upon their memory, tinged with the sad foreboding that they were never again to be renewed.

"That's the 'Riesen Fels,' Nelly, yonder," said Kate, as she pointed to a tall dark rock, on whose slopes the drifting snow had settled. "How sad and dreary it is, compared with what it seemed on Frank's birthday, when the nightingale was singing over-head, and the trickling stream came sparking along the grass when we sat together. I can bear to part with it better thus, than if all were as beautiful as then."

Nelly sighed, and grasped her sister's hand closer, but made no answer.

"Do you remember poor Hanserl's song—and his little speech about our all meeting there again in the next year—Nelly?"

"I do," said Nelly, in a low and whispering voice.

"And when Frank stood up, with the little gilt goblet, and said—

'With hearts as free from grief or care,
Here's to our happy ——'

'Wiederkehr,' cried Hanserl, supplying the word so aptly—how we all laughed, Nelly, at his catching the rhyme?"

"I remember!" sighed Nelly, still lower.

"What are you thinking of, Nelly, dearest?" said Kate, as she stood for a few seconds gazing at the sorrow-struck features of the other.

"I was thinking, dearest," said Nelly, "that when we were met together there on that night, that none of us foresaw what since has happened. Not the faintest suspicion of a separation crossed our minds. Our destinies, whatever else might betide, seemed, at least, bound up together. Our very poverty was like the guarantee of our unity, and yet see what has come to pass—Frank gone; you, Kate, going to leave us now—how shall we speculate on the future, then, when the past has so betrayed us? How pilot our course in the storm, when, even in the calm still sea, we have wandered from the track?"

"Nelly! Nelly! every moment I feel more faint-hearted at the

thought of separation. It is as though, in the indulgence of a mere caprice, I were about to incur some great hazard. Is it thus it appears to you?"

"With what expectations do you look forward to this great world you are going to visit, Kate? Is it mere curiosity to see with your own eyes the brilliant scenes of which you have only read? Is it with the hope of finding that elegance and goodness are sisters, that refinement of manners is the constant companion of noble sentiments and right actions —or, does there lurk in your heart the longing for a sphere wherein you yourself might contest for the prize of admiration? Oh! if this have a share in your wishes, my own dear sister, beware of it. The more worthy you are of such homage, the greater is your peril! It is not that I am removed from all temptations of this kind; it is not because I have no attractions of beauty, that I speak thus—even poor lame Nelly cannot tear from her woman's heart the love of admiration. But for *you*, I fear—for you, Kate, to whom these temptations will be heightened by your own deservings. You *are* beautiful, and you blush as I speak the word; but what if the time come when you will hear it unmoved—the modest sense of shame gone, what will replace it? Pride, —yes, my dear sister, Pride and Ambition! You will long for a station more in accordance with your pretensions, more suited to your tastes."

"How you wrong me, Nelly!" burst Kate in. "The brightest dream of all this brilliant future is the hope that I may come back to you more worthy of your love; that, imbibing some of those traits whose fascinations we have already felt, I may bring beneath our humble roof some memories, at least, to beguile your toil."

"Oh, if that time should come!"

"And it will come," dearest Nelly, said Kate, as she threw her arms around her, and kissed her affectionately. "But, see! there is Papa, yonder; he is beckoning to us to join him." And the two girls hastened forward to where Dalton was standing, at the corner of the street.

"I'm thinking we ought to go up, there, now," said Dalton, with a motion of his hand in the direction of the hotel. "Take my arm, each of you."

They obeyed, and walked along in silence, till they reached the inn, where Dalton entered, with a certain assumed ease and confidence that very commonly, with him, covered a weak purpose and a doubting spirit.

"Is Sir Stafford at home, or Lady Onslow?" asked he of Mr. Twig, who, with a cigar in his mouth, and a *Galignani* in his hand, never rose from the seat he occupied.

"Can't say, Sir," was the cool response, which he delivered without lifting his eyes from the newspaper.

"Do *you* know, Ma'am?" said he, addressing Mademoiselle Celestine, who happened to pass at the moment. "Do you know, Ma'am, if Lady Onslow's at home?"

"She never receive in de morning," was the curt reply. And, with a very impudent stare at the two sisters, whose dress imposed no restraint upon her insolence, Mademoiselle flounced past. "Come along, girls," said Dalton, angrily, and offended that he should appear to his children as if wanting in worldly tact and knowledge. "Come with *me*." And he proceeded boldly up-stairs.

A folding-door lay open before them into a large chamber, littered with boxes, trunks, and travelling gear of all kinds. Making his way through these, while he left his daughters outside, Dalton approached a door that led into an inner room, and knocked sharply at it with his knuckles.

"You may take it away, now; I've used cold water!" cried a voice from within, that at once proclaimed Dr. Grounsell.

Dalton repeated his summons more confidently.

"Go to the devil, I say," cried the Doctor; "you've made me cut my chin;" and the enraged Grounsell—with his face covered with lather, and streaming with blood—flung open the door in a passion. "Oh! Dalton, this you, and the ladies here," said he, springing back ashamed, as Kate's hearty burst of laughter greeted him—"Come in, Dalton, come in," said he, dragging the father forward and shutting the door upon him. "I was longing to see you, man; I was just thinking how I could have five minutes' talk with you. What answer have you given to the letter they've sent you?"

"What d'ye think," said Dalton, jocularly, as he seated himself in a comfortable chair.

"What do I think?" repeated he twice or thrice over. "Egad, I don't know what to think! I only know what to hope, and wish it may have been!"

"And what's that?" said Dalton, with a look of almost sternness, for he was not ignorant of the Doctor's sentiments on the subject.

"A refusal, of course," said Grounsell, who never yet was deterred by a look, a sign, or an innuendo, from any expression of his sentiments.

"And why so, Sir?" rejoined Dalton, warmly.

"On every ground in the world. What has your fine, generous-hearted, dear child, in common with that vile world of envy, malice, and all wickedness, you'd throw her amongst? What similarity in thought, feeling, or instinct, between *her* and that artificial class with whom you would associate her; with their false honour, false principle, and false delicacy? Nothing real and substantial about them but their wickedness. If you were a silly woman, like the mother in the Vicar of Wakefield,

I could forgive you; but a man—a hardened, worldly man, that has tasted poverty, and knows the rubs of life, I've no patience with you, d—n me! if I have!"

"A little more of this, and I'll have none with *you*," said Dalton, as he clenched his fist, and struck his knee a hard blow. "You presume to talk of us as people whose station was always what our present means imply; but I'd have you to know, that we've better blood in our veins——"

"Devil take your blood! you've made me spill mine again," cried Grounsell, as he sliced a piece off his chin, and threw down the razor, in a torrent of anger, while Dalton grinned a look of malicious satisfaction.

"Couldn't your good blood have kept you above anything like dependence?"

Dalton sprung to his feet, and clutching the chair, raised it in the air; but as suddenly dashed it on the floor again, without speaking.

"Go on," cried Grounsell, daring him. "I'd rather you'd break *my* skull than that dear girl's heart; and *that's* what you're bent on. Ay, break her heart! no less. You can't terrify me, man, by those angry looks. You can't wound me, either, by retaliating, and calling me a dependent. I know I am such. I know well all the ignominy, all the shame; but I know, too, all the misery of the position. But, mark me, the disgrace and the sorrow end where they begin—with myself alone. I have none to blush for me; I stand alone in the world, a poor, scathed, sapless, leafless trunk. But it is not so with *you*. Come, come, Dalton, you fancy that you know something of life because you have passed so many years of it among your equals and neighbours in your own country; but you know nothing—absolutely nothing—of the world as it exists here."

A hearty but contemptuous laugh broke from Dalton as he heard this speech. It was indeed somewhat of a surprise to listen to such a charge. He, Peter Dalton, that knew a spavined horse, or could detect a windgall better than any man in the county—he, that never was "taken in" by a roarer, nor deceived by a crib-biter—to tell him that he knew nothing of life!

"That'll do, Doctor; that'll do," said he, with a most compassionating smile at the other's ignorance. "I hope you know more about medicine than you seem to do about men and women." And, with these words, he left the room, banging the door after him as he went, and actually ashamed that he had been betrayed into warmth by one so evidently deficient in the commonest knowledge of the world.

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting, girls," said he, approaching them. "And, indeed, I might have spent my time better, too. But no matter; we must try and find out her Ladyship now, for the morning is slipping over."

VENUS APPEALS TO THE GRACIOUS
DIANA
ACCTEON

[illegible]

As he spoke, George Onslow appeared, and recognising the party with much cordiality, conducted them to the breakfast-room, where Sir Stafford, Lady Hester, and Miss Onslow were seated. If Sydney's reception of the two sisters was less enthusiastic than Lady Hester's, it was not less kind. Nelly was won almost instantaneously by the unaffected ease and simplicity of her manner. As for Dalton himself, her Ladyship had determined to carry him by storm. She suffered him to declaim about his ancestors and their wealth; heard him with assumed interest in all his interminable stories of Daltons for six generations; and artfully opposed to his regrets at the approaching departure of his daughter, the ingenious consolation that she was not about to sojourn with mere strangers, but with those united to her by the ties of kindred. George had, meanwhile, made two or three efforts to engage Kate in conversation, but, whether from the pre-occupation of her mind, agitated as it well might be at such a moment, or that his topics were so utterly new and strange to her, his attempt was not attended with any signal success. A sense of shame, too, at the disparity of her own and her sister's appearance, in contrast with the quiet elegance of Lady Hester and Miss Onslow's dress, oppressed her. Strange was it that this feeling should have agitated her, now; she, who always hitherto had never wasted a thought on such matters, and yet she felt it acutely; and as she glanced from the rustling robe of silk to the folds of her own homely costume, her heart beat painfully, and her breathing came short. Was she already changed, that thoughts like these could impress her so strongly? Had Adam's first shame descended to his daughter? "How unlike I am to them!" was the bitter thought that rose to her mind, and sat like a cancer into her heart.

The sense of inferiority, galling and torturing as it is, becomes infinitely more unendurable when connected with matters of trivial importance. There is a sense of indignant anger in the feeling, that we are surpassed by what seem the mere conventionalities and tricks of society, and although Kate knew not the source of her unhappiness, some of it lay in this fact. Every little gesture, every motion, the merest peculiarities of voice or accent now struck her as distinctive of a class—a class to which no imitation would ever give her a resemblance. If it were not for very shame, she would have drawn back now at the eleventh hour. More than once was she on the verge of confessing what was passing within her mind, but fears of various kinds—of her father's anger, of ridicule, of the charge of frivolity—all conspired to keep her silent, and she sat and listened to descriptions of pleasure and scenes wherein she had already lost every interest, and which somehow came associated with a sense of her now inferiority.

Never did home seem so regretable as in that moment; the humble

fireside in winter; the happy evenings with little Hanserl; the summer's day rambles in the forest; their little feasts beside the waterfall, under the ivy-clad walls of Eberstein—all rose before her. They were pleasures which had no alloy in her own humble lot, and why desert them? She had almost gained courage to say that she would not, when a chance word caught her ear—one word!—how little to hang a destiny upon! It was Lady Hester, who, conversing in a half-whisper with Mr. Dalton, said,

"She will be perfectly beautiful, when dressed becomingly."

Was this, then, all that was needed to give her the stamp and semblance of the others? Oh, if she could believe it! If she could but fancy that, at some future time, such graceful elegance should be her own, that gentle languor, that chastened quietude of Sydney, or that sparkling lightness of Lady Hester herself!

"What time de horses, Saar?" said the Courier, popping his head into the room.

"I scarcely know—what do you say, Lady Hester?"

"I'm quite ready—this instant if you like—indeed, I'm always the first," said she, gaily; "nobody travels with less preparation than I do. There, see all I want!" and she pointed to a fan, and a book, and a smelling-bottle; as if all her worldly effects and requirements went no further, and that four great imperials and a dozen capacious boxes were not packed with her wardrobe. "I do detest the worry and fuss some people make about a journey for a week, or even a month beforehand; they unsettle themselves and every one around them; putting under lock and key half the things of every-day utility, and making a kind of 'gaol-delivery' of all the imprisoned old cloaks and dresses of the toilet. As for me, I take the road as I'd go to the Opera, or drive out in the Park—I ask for my bonnet, that's all."

There was some truth in this. Her Ladyship did, in fact, give herself not a whit more thought or consideration for preparation of any kind, than if the excursion had been a promenade.

"It is now two o'clock," said Sir Stafford, "and if we mean to reach Offenburg to-night we must not lose more time. Isn't it Offenburg you advised as our halt, Mr. Jekyl?"

"Yes, Sir Stafford," simpered out that bland personage. "It is a most comfortable little inn, and a very praiseworthy cook."

"By-the-by, has any one thought of ordering luncheon here?" cried George.

Jekyl gave a nod, to intimate that he had taken that precaution.

"And Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester; "what of those bullfinches, for I must have them?"

"They are safely caged and packed in our britska, Madam. You'll

also find that your sketch-book, and the water-colours, are available at any moment, Miss Onslow," said he, with a respectful gesture. She smiled, and bowed her thanks in silence.

"And de horses, Saar?" asked the Courier once more: for during this colloquy he had been standing in expectation of his orders.

"Do tell him, Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester, with that tone of languor that bespoke her dislike to the trouble of even a trifling degree of resolution.

"I think we shall say in one hour, Grégoire," said Jekyl, mildly. "And, perhaps, it would be better that you should see——" What this matter was that the Courier should bestow his special attention upon, is not on record in this history, inasmuch as that when the speaker had reached thus far, he passed out of the door, talking as he went, in a low and confidential voice.

"Capital fellow—Jekyl!" exclaimed George; "he forgets nothing."

"He appears to be a most accomplished traveller," said Sir Stafford.

"And such a linguist!" said Sydney.

"And so amusing!" added my Lady.

"And such a rogue!" muttered Dalton to himself, "who, although so open to any imposition that took the form of flattery, could at once detect the knavery that was practised upon others, and who, at a glance, read the character of the new acquaintance.

"Don't you like the stir and excitement of the road, my dear child," said Lady Hester to Kate, who, with very red eyes and very pale cheeks, stood in a window to avoid being observed. "There is something so adventurous about a journey always. One may be robbed, you know, or the carriage upset, as happened to ourselves t'other day; or mistaken for somebody else, and carried off to prison. It gives such a flurry to the spirits to think of these things, and a life of monotony is so very detestable."

Kate tried to smile an assent, and Lady Hester ran on in the same strain, extolling the delights of anything and everything that promised an excitement. "You know, my dear child, that this little place has almost been the death of me," added she. "I never was so bored in all my life; and I vow I shall detest a mill and a pine-forest to the last day I live. If it had not been for you and your sweet sister, I do not know what we should have done; but it's all over now. The dreary interval is passed, and when we turn the foot of that hill yonder, we shall have seen the last of it."

Kate's heart was almost bursting as she heard these words. To speak thus of the little valley would have been a profanation at any time, but to do so now, when she was about to leave it—when she was about to

tear herself away from all the ties of love and affection, seemed an actual cruelty.

"Small places are my aversion," continued Lady Hester, who, when satisfied with her own talk, never cared much what effect it was producing upon others. "One grows down insensibly to the measure of a petty locality, with its little interests, its little people, and its little gossip —don't you think so, dear?"

"We were so happy here!" murmured Kate, in a voice that a choking fulness of her throat almost stifled.

"Of course you were, child, very happy; and it was very good of you to be so. Yes, very good and very right." Here Lady Hester assumed a peculiar tone, which she always put on whenever she fancied that she was moralising. "Natural amiability of disposition, and all that sort of thing, is very nice indeed; but there's luncheon I see, and now, my dear, let us take our places without loss of time. George, will you give your arm to Miss Dalton? Mr. Dalton—but where's Mr. Dalton?"

"Papa has taken him with him to his dressing-room," answered Sydney, "but begged you'd not wait; they'll be back presently."

"No lady does wait at luncheon," said Lady Hester, snappishly, while, drawing Kate's arm within her own, she led her into the adjoining room.

The party had scarcely seated themselves at table when they were joined by Jekyl. Indeed, Lady Hester had only time to complain of his absence when he appeared; for it was a trick of that gentleman's tact merely to make himself sufficiently regretted not to be blamed. And now he came to say that everything was ready. The postilions in the saddle; the carriages drawn up before the door; the relays had all been ordered along the road; the supper bespoke for the end of the journey. These pleasant facts he contrived to season with a running fire of little gossip and mimicry, in which the landlord, and Grégoire, and Mademoiselle Celestine, were the individuals personated.

Never were Mr. Jekyl's peculiar abilities more in request; for the moment was an awkward and embarrassing one for all, and none, save himself, were able to relieve its seriousness. Even Nelly smiled at the witty sallies and playful conceits of this clever talker, and felt almost grateful to him for the momentary distraction he afforded her from gloomier thoughts. With such success did he exert himself, that all the graver sentiments of the occasion were swallowed up in the pleasant current of his small talk, and no time given for a thought of that parting which was but a few minutes distant. Sir Stafford and Mr. Dalton were not sorry to discover the party in this pleasant humour, and readily chimed in with the gaiety around them.

The bugle of the postilions at length announced that "time was up,"

and the half hour which German politeness accords to leave-taking expired. A dead silence succeeded the sound, and as if moved by the same instinctive feeling, the two sisters arose, and withdrew into a window. Close locked in each other's arms, neither could speak. Kate's thick sobs came fast and full, and her heart beat against her sister's side as though it were bursting. As for Nelly, all that she had meant to say, the many things she had kept for the last moment, were forgotten, and she could but press the wet cheek to her own, and murmur a tremulous blessing.

"Oh, if I could but remain with you, Nelly dearest," sobbed Kate; "I feel even already my isolation. Is it too late, sister dear, is it too late to go back?"

"Not if this be not a sudden impulse of sorrow for parting, Kate; not if you think you would be happier here."

"But Papa! how will he—what will he——"

She had not time for more, when her father joined them. A certain flurry of his manner showed that he was excited by talking and wine together. There was that in the expression of his features, too, that betokened a mind ill at ease with itself—a restless alternating between two courses.

"'Tis you are the lucky girl, Kate," said he, drawing his arm around her, and pressing her to him. This day's good luck pays me off for many a hard blow of fortune. They're kind people you are going with, real gentry, and our own blood into the bargain."

A thick, heavy sob, was all the answer she could make.

"To be sure you're sorry; why wouldn't you be sorry, leaving your own home and going away among strangers; and 'tis I am sorry to let you go!"

"Are you so, dearest Papa? Are you really sorry to part with me; would you rather I'd stay behind with you and Nelly?" cried she, looking up at him with eyes swimming in tears.

"Would I—is it?" said he, eagerly, as he kissed her forehead twice; then, suddenly checking himself, he said, in an altered voice, "but that would be selfish, Kate, nothing else than downright selfish. Ask Nelly, there, if that's my nature? Not that Nelly will ever give me too good a character!" added he, bitterly. But poor Ellen neither heard the question nor the taunt; her mind was travelling many a long mile away in realms of dreary speculation.

"I'm sorry to interrupt a moment like this," said Sir Stafford, "but I believe I must take you away, Miss Dalton, our time is now of the shortest."

One fond and long embrace the sisters took, and Kate was led away

between Sir Stafford and her father, while Nelly went through a round of leave-takings with the others, in a state of semi-consciousness that resembled a dream. The courteous flatteries of Lady Hester fell as powerless on her ear as the rougher good wishes of Grounsell. George Onslow's respectful manner was as unnoticed as the flippant smartness of Albert Jekyl's. Even Sydney's gentle attempt at consolation was heard without heeding; and when one by one they had gone and left her alone in that dreary room, she was not more aware of her solitude than when they stood around her.

Couriers and waiters passed in and out to see that nothing had been forgotten; doors were slammed on every side; loud voices were calling; all the turmoil of a departure was there, but she knew nothing of it. Even when the loud cracking of the postilions' whips echoed in the courtyard, and the quick clatter of horses' feet and heavy wheels resounded through the arched doorway, she was still unmoved; nor did she recover full liberty of thought till her father stood beside her, and said, "Come, Nelly, let us go home."

Then she arose, and took his arm without a word. She would have given her life to have been able to speak even a few words of comfort to the poor old man, whose cheeks were wet with tears, but she could not utter a syllable.

"Ay, indeed," muttered he, "it will be a dreary home now!"

Not another word was spoken by either as they trod their way along the silent streets, over which the coming gloom of evening threw a mournful shadow. They walked, with bent-down heads, as if actually fearing to recognise the objects that they had so often looked upon with *her*, and, slowly traversing the little Platz, they gained their own door. There they halted, and, from habit, pulled the bell. Its little tinkle, heard in the stillness, seemed suddenly to recal them both to thought, for Dalton, with a melancholy smile, said,

"'Tis old Andy is coming now! 'Tisn't *her* foot I hear! Oh, Nelly, Nelly, how did you ever persuade me to this! Sure I know I'll never be happy again."

Nelly made no answer. The injustice of the speech was well atoned for in her mind by the thought that, in shifting the blame from himself to her, her father might find some sort of consolation; well satisfied to become the subject of his reproach, if the sacrifice could alleviate his sorrow.

"Take that chair away; throw it out of the window," cried he, angrily; "it breaks my heart to look at it." And with this he leaned his head upon the table, and sobbed like a child.

CHAPTER XX.

A VERY SMALL "INTERIOR."

In one of the most favoured spots of that pleasant quay, which goes by the name of the Lungo l'Arno, at Florence, there stood a small, miserable-looking, rickety old building, of two stories high, wedged in between two massive and imposing palaces, as though a buffer to deaden the force of collision. In all probability it owed its origin to some petty usurpation, and had gradually grown up, from the unobtrusive humility of a cobbler's bulk, to the more permanent nuisance of stone and mortar. The space occupied was so small as barely to permit of a door and a little window beside it, within which hung a variety of bridles, halters, and such like gear, with here and there the brass-mounted harnessing of a Calasina, or the gay worsted tassels and fringed finery of a peasant's Barroccino. The little spot was so completely crammed with wares, that for all purposes of traffic it was useless; hence, everything that pertained to sale was carried on in the street, thus contributing by another ingredient to the annoyance of this misplaced residence. Threats, tyranny, bribery, seductions of twenty kinds, intimidation in as many shapes, had all failed in inducing its owner to remove to another part of the town. Gigi—every one in Florence is known by his christian name, and we never heard him called by any other—resisted oppression as manfully as he was proof against softer influences, and held his ground, hammering away at his old "demi-piques," burnishing bits, and scouring housings, in utter indifference to the jarred nerves and chafed susceptibilities of his fine neighbours. It was not that the man was indifferent to money. It was not that the place was associated with any family reminiscences. It was not from its being very favourable to the nature of his dealings, since his chief customers were usually the frequenters of the less fashionable localities. It was the simple fact, that Gigi was a Florentine, and, like a Florentine, he saw no reason why he shouldn't have the sun and the Arno, as well as the Guiciardoni, who lived at his right, or the Rinuncini, who dwelt on his left hand.

Small and contracted as that miserable frontage was, the sun *did* shine upon it just as pleasantly as on its proud neighbours', and the bright Arno glided by with its laughing ripples; while, from the little window above stairs, the eye ranged over the cypress-clad hill of San Miniato, and the fair gardens of the Boboli. On one side lay the

quaint old structure of the Ponte Vecchio, with its glittering stores of jewellery, and on the other the graceful elliptic arches of St. Trinita spanned the stream. The quay before the door was the chosen rallying point of all Florence; the promenade where lounged all its fashionables of an evening, as they descended from their carriages after the accustomed drive in the Cascini. The Guardie Nobili passed daily, in all their scarlet bravery, to and from the Pitti Palace; the Grand Ducal equipage never took any other road. A continual flow of travellers to the great hotels on the quay, contributed its share of bustle and animation to the scene; so that here might be said to meet, as in a focus, all that made up the life, the stir, and the movement of the capital.

Full of amusement and interest as that moving panorama often is, our object is less to linger beside it, than, having squeezed our way between the chaotic wares of Gigi's shop, to ascend the little, dark, and creaking stairs, which leads to the first story, and into which we now beg to introduce our reader. There are but two rooms, each of them of the dimensions of closets, but furnished with a degree of pretension that cannot fail to cause amazement as you enter. Silk draperies, carved cabinets, bronzes, china, chairs of ebony, tables of buhl, a Persian rug on the floor, an alabaster lamp suspended from the ceiling, miniatures in handsome frames, and armour, cover the walls; while, scattered about, are richly-bound books, and prints, and drawings in water-colour. Through the half-drawn curtain that covers the doorway—for there is no door—you can peep into the back room, where a lighter and more modern taste prevails; the gold-sprigged curtains of a French bed, and the Bohemian glass that glitters everywhere, bespeaking another era of decorative luxury.

It is not with any invidious pleasure for depreciation, but purely in the interests of truth, that we must now tell our reader, that, of all this seeming elegance and splendour, nothing, absolutely nothing, is real. The brocaded silks have been old petticoats; the ebony is lacquer; the ivory is bone; the statuettes are plaster, glazed so as to look like marble; the armour is "papier-maché"—even to the owner himself, all is imposition—for he is no other than Albert Jekyl.

Now, my dear reader, you and I see these things precisely in the same light; the illusion of a first glance stripped off, we smile as we examine, one by one, the ingenious devices meant to counterfeit ancient art or modern elegance. It is possible, too, that we derive as much amusement from the ingenuity exercised, as we should have had pleasure in contemplating the realities so typified. Still there is one individual to whom this consciousness brings no alloy of enjoyment—Jekyl has persuaded himself to accept all as fact. Like the Indian, who

first carves and then worships his god, he has gone through the whole process of fabrication, and now gazes on his handiwork with the eyes of a true believer. Gracefully reclined upon an ottoman, the mock amber mouthpiece of a gilt hooka between his lips, he dreams, with half-closed eyes, of Oriental luxury! A Sybarite in every taste, he has invented a little philosophy of his own. He has seen enough of life, to know that thousands might live in enjoyment out of the superfluities of rich men, and yet make them nothing the poorer. What banquet would not admit of a guest the more? What *fête* to which another might not be added? What four-in-hand prances by without some vacant seat, be it even in the rumble. What gilded gondola has not a place to spare? To be this "complement" to the world's want is then his mission.

No man invents a "metier," without a strong element of success. The very creative power is an earnest of victory. It is true that there had been great men before Agamemnon; so had there been a race of "diners-out" before Jekyl; but he first reduced the practice to system; showing that all the triumphs of cookery, all the splendour of equipage, all the blandishments of beauty, all the fascinations of high society, may be enjoyed by one who actually does not hold a "share in the Company," and, without the qualification of scrip, takes his place among the Directors.

Had he brought to this new profession commonplace abilities and inferior acquirements, he would have been lost amid that vulgar herd of indistinguishables which infest every city, and whose names are not even "writ in water." Jekyl, however, possessed many and varied gifts. He might have made a popular preacher in a watering-place; a very successful doctor for nervous invalids; a clever practitioner at the bar; an admirable member of the newspaper press. He might have been very good as an actor; he would have been glorious as an auctioneer! With qualities of this order, a most plastic wit, and an India-rubber conscience, what bound need there be to his success! Nor was there. He was in all the society of the capital; not alone an admitted and accepted, but a welcome guest. He might have failed to strike this man as being clever, or that, as being agreeable. Some might be disappointed in his smartness; some, might think his social claims overrated; none, were ever offended by anything that fell from him. His great secret seemed to lie in the fact, that, if generally easy to be found when required, he was never in the way when not wanted. Had he possessed the gift of invisibility, he could scarcely have been more successful in this latter good quality. He never interrupted a confidence; never marred a *tête-à-tête;* a kind of instinct

would arrest his steps as he approached a boudoir, where his presence would be undesirable; and he has been known to retire from a door on which he had already placed his hand, with a sudden burst of intelligence suggesting to "come another day."

These, however, seem mere negative qualities; his positive ones were, however, not less remarkable. The faculties which some men might have devoted to abstract science or metaphysical inquiry, he, with a keen perception of his own fitness, resolved to exercise upon the world around him. His botany was a human classification, all his chemistry an analysis of men's motives. It is true, perhaps, that the poet's line may have been received by him with a peculiar limitation, and that if "The proper study of mankind, is man," his investigations took a shape scarcely contemplated by the writer. It was not man in his freedom of thought and action, not man in all the consciousness of power, and in the high hope of a great destiny that attracted him—No! it was for small humanity that he cared—for all the struggles, and wiles, and plots, and schemings of this wicked world—for man amid its pomps and vanities, its balls, its festivals, its intrigues, and its calamities.

He felt, with the great dramatist, that "All the world's a stage," and, the better to enjoy the performance, he merely took a "walking character," that gave him full leisure to watch the others. Such was our friend Albert Jekyl, or, as he was popularly called by his acquaintance, Le Duc de Dine-out, to distinguish him from the Talleyrands, who are Ducs de Dino.

Let us now, without further speculation, come back to him, as, with his window open to admit the "Arno sun," he lay at full length upon his ottoman, conning over his dinner-list. He had been for some time absent from Florence, and in the interval a number of new people had arrived, and some of the old had gone away. He was, therefore, running over the names of the present and the missing, with a speculative thought for the future.

"A bad season, it would seem!" muttered he, as his eye traced rapidly the list of English names, in which none of any distinction figured. "This comes of Carbonari and Illuminati humbug. They frighten John Bull, and he will not come abroad to see a barricade under his window. Great numbers have gone away too, the Scotts, the Carringdons, the Hopleys!—three excellent houses; and those dear Millwoods, who, so lately 'reconciled to Rome,' as the phrase is, 'took out their piety' in Friday fish-dinners.

"The Russians, too, have left us; the Geroboffskys gone back to their snows again, and expiating their 'liberal tendencies' by a tour in Siberia. The Chaptowitsch, recalled in disgrace for asking one of Louis Philippe's

sons to a breakfast! We have got in exchange a few Carlists, half-a-dozen 'Legitimists,' with very stately manners and small fortunes. But a good house to dine at, a good *salon* for a lounge, a pleasant haunt for all seasons and at all hours, what is there? Nothing, absolutely nothing. And what a city this was once—crammed, as it used to be, with dear delightful 'ruined families;' that is, those who left ruin to their creditors at home, to come out and live gloriously abroad. And now I look down my list, and, except my little Sunday dinner at 'Marescotte's,' and that half-luncheon thing I take at the Villa Pessarole, I really see nothing for the whole week. The Onslows, alone, figure in strong capitals. Let me see, then, how they must be treated. I have already housed them at the Palazzo Mazzarini, and, for some days at least, their time will be filled up with upholsterers, decorators, and such like. Then the campaign will open, and I can but watch eventualities, and there will be no lack of these. The young Guardsman likes play. I must see that Prince Carini does not get hold of him. Miss Onslow has a taste for gothic and stained glass; that, now-a-days, often ends in a love of saints' shinbones, and other relics. My lady is disposed to be a 'fast one;' and, in fact, except the gruff old Doctor, who is a confounded bore, the whole craft is deficient in ballast. But I was forgetting 'the Dalton,' shame on me, for she is very pretty indeed!" He seemed to ruminate and reflect for some minutes, and then said aloud, "Yes, ma belle Catherine, with the aid of Albert Jekyl, with *his* counsel to guide, and *his* head to direct you, there's no saying what your destiny might not be! It would be, I know well, very hard to convince you of the fact, and possibly were I to try it you'd be silly enough to fancy me in love with you!" Albert Jekyl in love! The idea was so excellent that he lay back and laughed heartily at it. "And yet," said he, after a pause, "you'll see this fact aright one of these days. You'll learn the immense benefit my knowledge would be, when joined to your own beauty. Ay, Kate! but it will be too late, just so, too late; then, like every one else, you'll have played all your trumps before you begin to learn the game.

"A girl who has caught up every trick of manner, every little tactic of society within a month, and who, at this hour, would stand the scrutiny of the most fastidious eye, is a great prize in the wheel. This aptitude might lead to great things, though, in all probability, it will never condose save to very little ones!" With this reflection Jekyl arose to begin his toilet, an occupation in which, less from dandyism than pure self-love, he usually prolonged during the whole morning.

It was to him a period of self-examination. He seemed—to use a mercantile figure—to be taking stock of his own capabilities, and investigating his own means of future success. It was an "open day;" that is, he

knew not where he should dine, so that his costume, while partaking of all the characteristics of the morning, had yet combined certain little decorative traits that would not be unsuitable, if pressed, to accept an unpremeditated hospitality.

There were very few, indeed, with whom Jekyl would have condescended so to dine, not only from the want of dignity incurred, but that on principle he would have preferred the humblest fare at home to the vulgarity of a pot-luck dinner, which invariably, as he said himself, deranged your digestion, and led to wrong intimacies.

His dress being completed, he looked out along the crowd to see in whose carriage he was to have a seat to the Cascini. More than one inviting gesture motioned him to a place, as equipage after equipage passed on; but although some of those who sought him were high in rank, and others distinguished for beauty and attraction, Jekyl declined the courtesies with that little wave of the hand so significative in all Italian intercourse. Occasionally, indeed, a bland regretful smile seemed to convey the sorrow the refusal cost him; and once he actually placed his hand over where his heart might be, as though to express a perfect pang of suffering, but still he bided his time.

At last, a very dark visage, surrounded by a whisker of blackest hair, peeped from beneath the head of a very shabby calèche, whose horse and coachman were all of the "seediest;" and Jekyl cried out, "Morlache!" while he made a sign towards the Cascini. The other replied by spreading out his hand horizontally from his mouth, and blowing along the surface—a pantomime meant to express a railroad. Jekyl immediately descended and took his place beside him.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FAMILY PICTURE.

The fashionable life of a great city has a character of sameness, which defies all attempts at portraiture. Well-bred people, and their amusements, are all constructed so perfectly alike—certain family traits pervading them throughout—that every effort at individualization is certain to be a failure. You may change the *venue*, if you will, from London to Paris, to Vienna, or St. Petersburg, but the issue is always the same; the very same interests are at work, and the same passions exercised by the self-same kind of people. If such be the rule among the first-rate capitals of Europe, it is [illegible] from being the case in those smaller cities which belong [illegible] which, from reasons of health,

·, or economy, are the resort of strangers from different parts of
·ld. In these, society is less disciplined, social rank less defined;
ing claims and rival nationalities disturb the scene, and there is,
y, a kind of struggle for pre-eminence, which in better regulated
ities is never witnessed. If, as is unquestionably true, such
nrely present the attractions of good society, they offer to the
server infinitely more varied and amusing views of life, than he
ver expect to see elsewhere. As in the few days of a revolution,
e "barricades are up," and all hurrying to the conflict, more of
l character will be exhibited than in half a century of tame
ce to the law, so here are displayed, to the sun and the noonday,
e passions and pretensions which rarely see the light in other

great besetting sin of this social state is the taste for NOTORIETY.
ing must contribute to this! Not alone wealth, splendour, rank,
ins, but vice, in all its shapes and forms, must be notorious.
: be calumniated in all the moods and tenses than untalked of,"
rand axiom. Do something that can be reported of you; good,
will,—bad, if you must; but do it. If you be not rich enough
ish by the caprices of your wealth, do something by your wits, or
ur whiskers. The colour of a man's gloves has sufficed to make
me.

. this strange ocean, which, if rarely storm-shaken, was never
r tranquil, the Onslows were now launched, as well pleased as
usually are who, from being of third or fourth-rate importance, in
n country, suddenly awake to the fact that they are celebrities,

Mazzarini Palace had long been untenanted; its last occupant had
e of the Borghese family, whose princely fortune was still unable
tain the splendour of a residence fitted only for royalty. To
erefore, that a rich "Milordo" had arrived there with the in-
of passing his winter, was a piece of news that occupied every
in the city. Gossips were questioned about the private history,
rage consulted for such facts as were public. Sir Stafford's
ras actively discussed, and all possible inroads upon it his son's
ance might have made, debated and decided on. A minute in-
on into their probable reasons for leaving England was also
l, in which conjectures far more ingenious than true figured
ntly. What they were like,—what they said, did, and meant to
the sole table-talk of the capital.

've had their horses out from England," said one; "They've taken
box at the Pergola," said another; "They've engaged Midche-

koff's cook," said a third; "They've been speaking to Gridani about his band," chimed in a fourth; and so on. All their proceedings were watched and followed by that eager vulture-hood which hungers for ortolans, and thirsts for iced champagne.

Nor were the Onslows without offering food for this curious solicitude. From the hour of her arrival, Lady Hester had been deeply engaged, in concert with her grand vizier, Albert Jekyl, in preparations for the coming campaign. An army of upholsterers, decorators, and such like, beset the Palazzo with enormous vans crammed full of wares. Furniture, that had served royal guests, and was even yet in high preservation, was condemned, to give way to newer and more costly decoration;—rich stuffs and hangings, that had been the admiration of many a visitor, were ruthlessly pulled down, to be replaced by even more gorgeous materials: 'till at last it was whispered about, that, except some antique cabinets, the pictures, and a few tables of malachite or marble, little or nothing remained of what once had constituted the splendour of the place.

These were mere rumours, however, for as yet none, save Albert Jekyl himself, had seen the interior: and from him, unless disposed to accord it, all confidence was hopeless. Indeed, his little vague stare when questioned—his simpering, "I shouldn't wonder," "It is very likely," or, "Now that you mention it, I begin to think so too," would have disarmed the suspicion of all who had not studied him deeply. What the Onslows were going to do, and when they would do it, were, then, the vexed questions of every coterie. In a few days more the Carnival would begin, and yet no announcement of their intentions had yet gone forth—no programme of future festivities been issued to the world. A vague and terrible fear began to prevail that it was possible they meant all these splendid preparations for themselves alone. Such a treason was incredible at first; but as day followed day, and no sign was made, suspicion ripened into actual dread; and now, the eager expectants began to whisper among themselves dark reasons for a conduct so strange and inexplicable.

Haggerstone contributed his share to these mysterious doubtings, for while not confessing that his acquaintance with the Onslows was of the very slightest, and dated but from a week before, he spoke of them with all the affected ease and information of one, who had known them for years.

Nor were his comments of the most flattering kind, for seeing how decidedly every effort he made to renew acquaintance was met by a steady opposition, he lost no time in assuming his stand as enemy. The interval of doubt which had occurred as to their probable mode of life was favourable for this line of action. None knew if they were ever to

partake of the splendour and magnificence of the Mazzarini; none could guess what chance they had of the sumptuous banquets of the rich man's table. It was a lottery, in which, as yet, they had not even a ticket, and what so natural as to depreciate the scheme.

If the courts of law and equity be the recognised tribunals by which the rights of property are decided, so there exists in every city certain not less decisive courts, which pronounce upon all questions of social claims, and deliver judgments upon the pretensions of every new arrival amongst them. High amid the number of these was a certain family called Ricketts, who had been residents of Florence for thirty odd years back. They consisted of three persons—General Ricketts, his wife, and a maiden sister of the general. They inhabited a small house in a garden within the boulevard, dignified by the name of the "Villino Zoe." It had originally been the humble residence of a market-gardener, but by the aid of paint and plaster, contrived to impose upon the world almost as successfully as did the fair owner herself by the help of similar adjuncts. A word, however, for the humanities before we speak of their abiding place. The "General"—Heaven alone knew when, where, or in what service he became so—was a small, delicate little man, with bland manners, a weak voice, a weak stomach, and a weaker head; his instincts all mild, gentle, and inoffensive, and his whole pursuit in life a passion for inventing fortifications, and defending passes and *têtes-du-pont* by lines, circumvallations, and ravelins, which cost reams of paper and whole buckets of water-colour to describe. The only fire which burned within his nature was a little flickering flame of hope, that one day the world would awake to the recognition of his great discoveries, and his name be associated with those of Vauban and Carnot. Sustained by this, he bore up against contemporary neglect and actual indifference; he whispered to himself, that, like Nelson, he would one day "have a gazette of his own," and in this firm conviction, he went on with rule and compass, measuring and daubing and drawing from morn till night, happy, humble, and contented: nothing could possibly be more inoffensive than such an existence. Even the French—our natural enemies,—or the Russians—our Palmerstonian "Bêtes Noires,"—would have forgiven, had they but seen, the devices of his patriotism. Never did heroic ardour burn in a milder bosom, for though his brain revelled in all the horrors of siege and slaughter, he would not have had the heart to crush a beetle.

Unlike him in every respect was the partner of his joys: a more bustling, plotting, scheming existence it was hard to conceive. Most pretenders are satisfied with aspiring to one crown; *her* ambitions were "legion." When Columbus received the taunts of the courtiers on the ease of his

[illegible] said a third; "They've been [illegible] [illegible]ply in the fact that [illegible] chimed in a fourth; and so on. [illegible]ptible of very wide [illegible] and followed by that eager [illegible] [illegible]mote the happiness [illegible] and thirsts for iced champagne [illegible] [illegible]nit more difficult than [illegible]

Nor were the Onslows without offeri[illegible] [illegible]d that some one should [illegible] the hour of her arrival, Lady [illegible] may have done so in moods of [illegible] with her grand vizier, [illegible] [illegible]te was a practical intelligence. [illegible] campaign. An army of [illegible] seen at Naples the lava used for [illegible] the Palazzo with enormo[illegible] [illegible]s, and by other treatment, might [illegible] that had served royal gu[illegible] [illegible]es and colours of Bohemian glass, [illegible] to give way [illegible] [illegible]aw material was equally misapplied [illegible] and hangings that [illegible] [illegible], by the touch of genius, might be [illegible] pulled d[illegible] [illegible]uchanter. This was "Flattery." Do [illegible] at last it [illegible] my dear reader—do not smile at her [illegible] the pictures [illegible] had been merely exploring an old and [illegible] remained of w[illegible] [illegible] was not, as the world employs it, an ex-

These were mere [illegible] qualities, but a grand poetic and creative [illegible] had seen [illegible] great sublime it praised. Whatever your [illegible] confidence [illegible] she instantly laid hold of it to entrap [illegible]—his [illegible] your size, stature, or symmetry, she could cos-[illegible] "Now that [illegible] [illegible]er praises, like an elastic-web livery, fitted all [illegible] the su[illegible] [illegible] they of the most abject slavery, who were [illegible] [illegible] crafty intelligence!

[illegible] ques[illegible] [illegible] Martha, and we have done; nor, indeed, is there [illegible] and [illegible] more than that she was universally known as [illegible] their acquaintance. Oh! what patience, submis-[illegible] [illegible] it takes before the world will confer its degree of [illegible] [illegible] condescend to visit, even with so cheap a thing [illegible] [illegible] of an enduring self-devotion. Martha had had [illegible] [illegible] brother: and although, when he married [illegible] [illegible] died broken-hearted at the shock, she clung [illegible] unable to separate from one, to whose habits [illegible] for above thirty years. It was said that [illegible] a person of good common faculties, and a reasonably [illegible] the world; but to see her at the time of which we now [illegible] remained of either—not a stone marked where the [illegible] Nor can this be matter of wonderment. Who could [illegible] all the phantasmagoria of that unreal existence, [illegible] clean mad, or made a weak compromise with sanity, [illegible] as real. Poor Martha had exactly these two al-[illegible] "believe the crusts, mutton," or be eternally shut out

·ll the long and terrible struggle such a mind
'·· bursts of honest energy repelled by fear
··· baffled by natural humility, and the

· ·t her much, to believe this strange creed
· ·he ended by doing so. So implicit was her
devotee, she would not trust the evidence of her
·l by the articles of her belief. The very pictures,
·he had been present, and whose restoration and re-
·n the work of her own hands, she was willing to aver
gifts of royal and princely personages. The books for
·d herself written to the publishers, she would swear were
·· offered by the respective writers to the throne of taste and
·n. Every object with whose humble birth and origin she was
·iliar, was associated in her mind with some curious history, which,
got off by rote, she repeated with full credulity. Like the well-known athlete, who lifted a bull because he had accustomed himself to the feat since the animal had been a calf, rising from small beginnings, she had so educated her faculties, that now nothing was above her powers. Not all the straits and contrivances by which this motley display was got up—not all the previous schemings and plottings—not all the discussions as to what King or Kaiser this should be attributed—by what artist that was painted—who carved this cup—who enamelled that vase—could shake the firmness of her faith when the matter was once decided. She might oppose the Bill in every stage; she might cavil at it, in Committee; and divide on every clause; but when it once became law, she revered it as a statute of the land. All her own doubts faded away on the instant; all her former suggestions vanished at once; a new light seemed to break on her mind, and she appeared to see with the eyes of truth and discernment. We have been led away beyond our intention in this sketch, and have no space to devote to that temple wherein the mysteries were celebrated. Enough if we say that it was small and ill-arranged, its discomfort increased by the incongruous collection of rare and curious objects by which it was filled. Stuffed lions stood in the hall; mock men in armour guarded the entrance to the library; vast glass cases of mineralogical wealth, botanical specimens, stuffed birds, impaled butterflies, Indian weapons, Etrurian cups, Irish antiquities, Chinese curiosities, covered the walls on every side. Not a specimen amongst them that could not trace its presentation to some illustrious donor. Miniatures of dear, dear friends were everywhere; and what a catholic friendship was that which included every one, from

Lord Byron to Chalmers, and took in the whole range of morals, from Mrs. Opie to Fanny Elssler. Indeed, although the fair Zoe was a "rigid virtue," her love of genius, her "mind-worship," as she called it, often led her into strange intimacies with that intellectual class whose strength lies in pirouettes, and whose gifts are short petticoats. In a word, whatever was "notorious" was her natural prey: a great painter, a great radical, a great basso, a great traveller; any one to lionise, anything to hang a history upon; to enlist, even "for one night only," in that absurd comedy which was performed at her house, and to display among her acquaintances as another in that long catalogue of those who came to lay the tribute of their genius at her feet.

That a large section of society was disposed to be rude and ungenerous enough to think her a bore, is a fact that we are, however unwilling, obliged to confess; but her actual influence was little affected by the fact. The real serious business of life is often carried on in localities surrounded by innumerable inconveniences. Men buy and sell their millions, subsidise states, and raise loans, in dens dark and dismal enough to be prison-cells. In the same way, the Villino was a recognised rendezvous of all who wanted to hear what was going on in the world, and who wished to be *à la hauteur* of every current scandal of the day. Not that such was ever the tone of the conversation; on the contrary, it was "all taste and the musical glasses," the "naughty talk" being the mere asides of the scene.

Now, in that season of foreign life which precedes the Carnival, and on those nights when there is no opera, any one benevolent enough to open his doors to receive is sure of full houses; so the Villino "improved the occasion," by announcing a series of Tuesdays and Fridays, which were, as the papers say, frequented by all the rank and fashion of the metropolis. It is at one of these "at homes" that we would now present our reader—not, indeed, during the full moon of the reception, when the crowded rooms, suffocating with heat, were crammed with visitors, talking in every tongue of Europe, and every imaginable dialect of each. The great *mêlée* tournament was over, and a few merely lingered over the now empty lists, discussing in familiar converse the departed guests and the events of the evening.

This privy council consisted of the reader's old acquaintance, Haggerstone, a Russo-Polish Count Petrolaffski, a dark, sallow-skinned, odd-looking gentleman, whose national predilections had raised him to the rank of an enemy to the Emperor, but whose private resources, it was rumoured, came from the Imperial treasury, to reward his services as a spy; a certain Mr. Scroope Purvis, the brother of Mrs. Ricketts, complet-

ing the party. He was a little rosy-cheeked old man, with a limp and a stutter, perpetually running about, retailing gossip, which, by some accident or other, he invariably got all wrong, never, on even the most trifling occasion, being able to record a fact as it occurred.

Such were the individuals of a group which sat around the fire in close and secret confab, Mrs. Ricketts herself placed in the midst, her fair proportions gracefully disposed in a chair whose embroidery displayed all the quarterings and emblazonment of her family for centuries back. The "Bill" before the house was the Onslows', whose *res gestæ* were causing a most intense interest everywhere.

"Have dey return your call, Madam?" asked the Pole, with an almost imperceptible glance beneath his dark brows.

"Not yet, Count; we only left our cards yesterday." This, be it said in parenthesis, was "inexact"—the visit had been made eight days before. "Nor should we have gone at all, but Lady Foxington begged and entreated we would. 'They will be so utterly without guidance of any kind,' she said; 'you must really take them in hand.'"

"And you will take dem in your hand—eh?"

"That depends, my dear Count—that depends," said she, pondering. "We must see what line they adopt here; rank and wealth have no influence with us if ununited with moral and intellectual excellence."

"I take it, then, your circle will be more select than amusing, this winter," said Haggerstone, with one of his whip-cracking enunciations.

"Be it so, Colonel," sighed she, plaintively, "Like a lone beacon on a rock, with—I forget the quotation."

"With the phos-phos-phos-phate of lime upon it?" said Purvis, "that new discov-co-covery?"

"With no such thing! A figure is, I perceive, a dangerous mode of expression."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried he, with a peculiar cackle, whose hysteric notes always carried himself into the seventh heaven of enjoyment, "you would cut a pretty figure if you were to be made a beacon of, and be burned like Moses. Ha! ha! ha!"

The lady turned from him in disdain, and addressed the Colonel.

"So you really think that they are embarrassed, and that is the true reason of their coming abroad."

"I believe I may say, I know it, Ma'am!" rejoined he. "There is a kind of connexion between our families, although I should be very sorry they'd hear of it—the Badelys and the Harringtons are first cousins."

"Oh, to be sure!" broke in Purvis. "Jane Harrington was father;

no, no, not father—she was mo-mo-mother of Tom Badely; no! that isn't it, she was his aunt, or his brother-in-law, I forget which."

"Pray be good enough, Sir, not to involve a respectable family in a breach of the common law," said Haggerstone, tartly, "and leave the explanation to me."

"How I do dislike dat English habit of countin' cousins," said the Pole; "you never see tree, four English togeder widout a leetle tree of genealogie in de middle, and dey do sit all round, fighting for de fruit."

"Financial reasons, then, might dictate retirement," said Mrs. Ricketts, coming back to the original theme.

A very significant nod from Haggerstone inferred that he concurred in the remark.

"Four contested elections for a county, Ma'am, a spendthrift wife, and a gambling son, rarely increase a man's income," said he, sententiously.

"Do he play? What for play is he fond of?" asked the Pole, eagerly.

"Play, Sir? There is nothing an Englishman will not play at—from the turf, to tossing for sovereigns."

"So *Hamlet* say, in Shakspeare, 'de play is de ting,'" cried the Count, with the air of a man who made a happy quotation.

"They are going to have plays," broke in Purvis; "Jekyl let it out to-night. They're to get up a Vau-vau-vau-vau——"

"A *tête de veau*, probably, Sir," said Haggerstone; "in which case," continued he, in a whisper, "you would be invaluable."

"No, it isn't that," broke in Purvis; "they are to have what they call Pro-verbs."

"I trust they have engaged your services as *Solomon*, Sir," said Haggerstone, with that look of satisfaction which always followed an impudent speech.

"I heard the subject of one of them," resumed the other, who was far too occupied with his theme to bestow a thought upon a sarcasm. "There's a lady in love with—with—with her Mam-mam-mam——"

"Her Mamma," suggested the Pole.

"No, it isn't her Mamma; it's her Mam-ame-ameluke—her Mameluke slave; and he, who is a native prince, with a great many wives of his own——"

"Oh, for shame, Scroope, you forget Martha is here," said Mrs. Ricketts, who was always ready to suppress the bore by a call to order on the score of morals.

"It isn't wrong, I assure you; just hear me out; let me only explain——"

"There, pray don't insist, I beg you," said Mrs. Ricketts, with a regal wave of her hand.

"Why, it's Miss Dalton is to play it, Jekyl says," cried Purvis, in a tone of most imploring cadence.

"And who may Miss Dalton be?" asked Mrs. Ricketts.

"She's the niece—no, she's the aunt,—or rather her father is aunt to—to ——"

"He may be an old lady, Sir; but, surely ——"

"Oh, I have it now!" broke in Purvis. "It was her mother; Miss Da-a-alton's mother was uncle to a Stafford."

"Perhaps I can shorten the pedigree," said Haggerstone, tartly. "The young lady is the daughter of a man whom this same Sir Stafford tricked out of his fortune; they were distant relatives, so he hadn't even the plea of blood-relationship to cover his iniquity. It was, however, an Irish fortune, and, like a Spanish château, its loss is more a question of feeling than of fact. The lawyers still say that Dalton's right is unimpeachable, and that the Onslows have not even the shadow of a case for a jury.

"An' have de lady no broder nor sister?" asked the Count, who had heard this story with much attention.

"She has, Sir, both brother and sister, but both illegitimate, so that this girl is the heiress to the estate."

"And probably destined to be the wife of the young Guardsman," said Mrs. Ricketts.

"Guessed with your habitual perspicuity, Madam," said Haggerstone, bowing.

"How very shocking! What worldliness one sees everywhere!" cried she, plaintively.

"The world is excessively worldly, Madam," rejoined Haggerstone; "but I really believe that we are not a jot worse than were the Patriarchs of old."

"Ah, oui, les Patriarches!" echoed the Pole, laughing, and always ready to seize upon an allusion that savoured of irreverence.

"Count!—Colonel Haggerstone!" cried Mrs. Ricketts, in reproof, and with a look to where Martha sat at her embroidery-frame. "And this Miss Dalton—is she pretty?"

"She is pretty at this moment, Madam; but, with a clever hairdresser and a good milliner, would be downright beautiful. Of course these are adjuncts she is little likely to find during her sojourn with the Onslows."

"Poor thing! how glad one would be to offer her a kinder asylum," said Mrs. Ricketts, while she threw her eyes over the cracked china monsters and mock Vandykes around her; "a home," added she,

"where intellectuality and refinement might compensate for the vulgar pleasures of mere wealth!"

"She may want such, one of these days yet, or I'm much mistaken," said Haggerstone. "Onslow has got himself very deep in railway speculations; he has heavy liabilities in some Mexican mining affairs too. They've all been living very fast; and a crash—a real 'crash'"—this word he gave with a force of utterance that only malignity could compass—"is almost certain to follow. What an excellent stable will come to the hammer then! There's a 'Bonesetter' colt worth a thousand guineas, with his engagements."

And now there was a little pause in the dialogue, while each followed out the thoughts of his own mind. Haggerstone's were upon the admirable opportunity of picking up a first-rate batch of horses for a fourth of their value; Mrs. Ricketts was pondering over the good policy of securing possession of a rich heiress as a member of her family, to be held in bondage as long as possible, and eventually—if it must be—given in marriage to some unprovided-for cousin; the Pole's dreams were of a rich wife; and Purvis, less ambitious than the rest, merely revelled in the thought of all the gossip this great event, when it should come off, would afford him; the innumerable anecdotes he would have to retail of the family and their wastefulness; the tea-parties he should enliven by his narratives; the soirées he would amuse with his sallies. Blessed gift of imbecility! how infinitely more pleasurable to its possessor than all the qualities and attributes of genius!

"Dat is ver pretty, indeed, très jolie!" said the Count, bestowing a look of approval at the embroidery-frame, whereupon, for eight mortal months, poor Martha laboured at the emblazonment of the Ricketts' arms; "de leetle dogs are as de life."

"They are tigers, Monsieur le Comte," replied she, modestly.

"Oh, pardon! dey are 'tigres!'"

"Most puppies are somewhat tigerish now-a-days," chimed in Haggerstone, rising to take his leave.

"You are leaving us early, Colonel," said the old General, as he awoke from a long nap on the little corner sofa, which formed his resting-place.

"It is past two, Sir; and, even in *your* society, one cannot cheat time." Then, having acquitted himself of his debt of impertinence, he wished them good night. The others, also, took their leave and departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

KATE.

Let us now return to Kate Dalton, whose life, since we last saw her, had been one round of brilliant enjoyment. To the pleasure of the journey, with all its varied objects of interest, the picturesque scenery of the Via Mala, the desolate grandeur of the Splugen, the calm and tranquil beauty of Como, succeeded the thousand treasures of art in the great cities where they halted. At first every image and object seemed associated by some invisible link with thoughts of home. What would Nelly think or say of this? was the ever-recurring question of her mind. How should she ever be able to treasure up her own memories and tell of the wonderful things that every moment met her eyes? The quick succession of objects all new and dazzling, were but so many wonders to bring back to that "dear fireside" of home. The Onslows themselves, who saw everything without enthusiasm of any kind, appeared to take pleasure in the freshness of the young girl's admiration. It gave them, as it were, a kind of reflected pleasure, while, amid galleries and collections of all that was rare and curious, nothing struck them as half so surprising as the boundless delight of her unhackneyed nature.

Educated to a certain extent, by watching the pursuits of her sister, Kate knew how to observe with taste, and admire with discrimination. Beauty of a high order would seem frequently endowed with a power of appreciating the beauty of art—a species of relation appearing almost to subsist between the two.

Gifted with this instinct, there was an intensity in all her enjoyments, which displayed itself in the animation of her manner, and the elevated expression of her features. The coldest and most worldly natures are seldom able to resist the influence of this enthusiasm; however hard the metal of their hearts, they must melt beneath this flame. Lady Hester Onslow, herself, could not remain insensible to the pure sincerity and generous warmth of this artless girl. For a time the combat, silent, unseen, but eventful, was maintained between these two opposite natures, the principle of good warring with the instincts of evil. The victory might have rested with the true cause—there was every prospect of its doing so—when Sydney Onslow, all whose sympathies were with Kate, and whose alliance had every charm of sisterhood, was suddenly recalled to England by tidings of her Aunt's illness. Educated by her Aunt Conway, she had always looked up to her as a

mother, nor did the unhappy circumstances of her father's second marriage tend to weaken this feeling of attachment. The sad news reached them at Genoa; and Sydney, accompanied by Doctor Grounsell, at once set out for London. If the sudden separation of the two girls, just at the very moment of a budding friendship, was sorrowfully felt by both, to Lady Hester the event was anything but unwelcome.

She never had liked Sydney; she now detested the notion of a step-daughter, almost of her own age, in the same society with herself: she dreaded, besides, the influence that she had already acquired over Kate, whose whole heart and nature she had resolved on monopolising. It was not from any feeling of attachment or affection, it was the pure, miserlike desire for possession, that animated her. The plan of carrying away Kate from her friends and home had been her own; *she*, therefore, owned her; the original title was vested in her; the young girl's whole future was to be in her hands; her "road in life" was to be at *her* dictation. To be free of Sydney, and the odious Doctor, by the same event, was a double happiness, which, in spite of all the decorous restraints bad news impose, actually displayed itself in the most palpable form.

The Palazzo Mazzarini was now to be opened to the world, with all the splendour wealth could bestow, untrammelled by any restriction, the taste of Sydney or the prudence of the Doctor might impose. Sir Stafford, ever ready to purchase quiet for himself at any cost of money, objected to nothing. The cheapness of Italy, the expectations formed of an Englishman, were the arguments which always silenced him if he ventured on the very mildest remonstrance about expenditure: and Jekyl was immediately called into the witness-box, to show that among the economies of the Continent, nothing was so striking as the facilities of entertaining. George, as might be supposed, had no dislike to see their own house the great centre of society, and himself the much sought-after and caressed youth of the capital.

As for Kate, pleasure came associated in her mind with all that could elevate and exalt it,—refinement of manners, taste, luxury, the fascinations of wit, the glitter of conversational brilliancy. She had long known that she was handsome, but she had never felt it till now; never awoke to that thrilling emotion, which whispers of power over others, and which elevates the possessor of a great quality into a species of petty sovereignty above their fellows. Her progress in this conviction was a good deal aided by her maid; for, at Jekyl's suggestion, a certain Mademoiselle Nina had been attached to her personal staff.

It was not easy at first for Kate to believe in the fact at all, that she should have a peculiar attendant; nor was it without much constraint

and confusion that she could accept of services from one whose whole air and bearing bore the stamp of breeding and tact. Mademoiselle Nina had been the maid of the Princess Menzikoff, the most distinguished belle of Florence, the model of taste and elegance in dress; but when the Princess separated from her husband, some unexplained circumstances had involved the name of the femme-de-chambre, so that, instead of "exchanging without a difference," as a person of her great abilities might readily have done, she had disappeared for a while from the scene and sphere in which habitually she moved, and only emerged from her seclusion to accept the humble position of Kate Dalton's maid. She was a perfect type of her own countrywomen in her own class of life. Small and neatly formed, her head was too large for her size, and the forehead over-large for the face, the brows and temples being developed beyond all proportion; her eyes, jet black and deeply set, were cold, stern-looking, and sleepy, sadness, or rather weariness, being the characteristic expression of the face. Her mouth, however, when she smiled, relieved this, and gave a look of softness to her features. Her manner was that of great distance and respect—the trained observance of one who had been always held in the firm hand of discipline, and never suffered to assume the slightest approach to a liberty. She contrived, however, even in her silence, or in the very few words she ever uttered, to throw an air of devotion into her service that took away from the formality of a manner that at first seemed cold, and even repulsive. Kate, indeed, in the beginning, was thrown back by the studied reserve and deferential distance she observed; but as days went over, and she grew more accustomed to the girl's manner, she began to feel pleased with the placid and unchanging demeanour, that seemed to bespeak a mind admirably trained and regulated to its own round of duties.

While Kate sat at a writing-table adding a few lines to that letter which, began more than a week ago, was still far from being completed, Nina, whose place was beside the window, worked away with bent down head, not seeming to have a thought, save for the occupation before her. Not so Kate; fancies came and went at every instant, breaking in upon the tenor of her thoughts, or wending far away on errands of speculation. Now, she would turn her eye from the page, to gaze in wondering delight at the tasteful decorations of her little chamber—a perfect gem of elegance in all its details; then, she would start up to step out upon the terrace, where even in winter the orange-trees were standing, shedding their sweet odour at every breeze from the Arno; with what rapturous delight she would follow the windings of that bright river, till it was lost in the dark woods of the Cascini! How the sounds of passing equipages, the glitter and display of the moving throng, stirred her heart,

within the room, with what a thrill of
splendid ball-dress which Nina had just
With a trembling hand she touched the delicate
placed it over her arm in a graceful fold, her
chest heaving in consciousness of heightening

never raised, her nimble fingers never ceased to ply.
brows, her darker eyes shot forth a glance of deep
as she watched the young girl's gesture.
she at last, "it is much too handsome for me; although
it I actually fear to wear it. You know I never have
like this before."
Mademoiselle is too diffident and too unjust to her own charms;
is the robe it only suits the elegance of its wearer."
ought to be so graceful in every gesture, so perfect in every
beneath folds like these," cried Kate, still gazing at the fine

Mademoiselle is grace itself!" said she, in a low soft voice, so
in its utterance, that it sounded like a reflection uttered unconsciously.

"Oh, Nina! if I were so. If I only could feel that my every look and movement were not recalling the peasant girl; for, after all, I have been little better—our good blood could not protect us from being poor, and poverty means so much that lowers!"

Nina sighed, but so softly as to be inaudible, and Kate went on.

"My sister, Nelly, never thought so; she always felt differently. Oh! Nina, how you would love her if you saw her, and how you would admire her beautiful hair, and those deep blue eyes, so soft, so calm, and yet so meaning."

Nina looked up, and seemed to give a glance that implied assent.

"Nelly would be so happy here, wandering through these galleries and sitting for hours long in those beautiful churches, surrounded with all that can elevate feeling or warm imagination; she, too, would know how to profit by these treasures of art. The frivolous enjoyments that please me would be beneath her; perhaps, she would teach me better things; perhaps I might turn from mere sensual pleasure, to higher and purer sources of happiness."

"Will Mademoiselle permit me to try this wreath?" said Nina, advancing with a garland of white roses, which she gracefully placed around Kate's head.

A half cry of delight burst from Kate as she saw the effect in the glass.

"Beautiful, indeed!" said Nina, as though in concurrence, with an unspoken emotion.

"But, Nina, I scarcely like this—it seems as though—I cannot tell what I wish—as though I would desire notice—I, that am nothing—that ought to pass unobserved."

"You, Mademoiselle," cried Nina, and for the first time a slight warmth colouring the tone of her manner; "you, Mademoiselle—the belle, the beauty, the acknowledged beauty of Florence."

"Nina! Nina!" cried Kate, rebukingly.

"I hope Mademoiselle will forgive me. I would not for the world fail in my respect," said Nina, with deep humility; "but I was only repeating what others spoke."

"I am not angry, Nina—at least, not with you," said Kate, hurriedly. 'With myself, indeed, I'm scarcely quite pleased. But who could have said such a silly thing?"

"Every one, Mademoiselle; every one, as they were standing beneath the terrace t'other evening. I overheard Count Labinski say it to Captain Onslow; and then my Lady took it up, and said, 'You are quite right, gentlemen; there is nothing that approaches her in beauty.'"

"Nina! dear Nina!" said Kate, covering her flushed face with both hands.

"The Count de Melzi was more enthusiastic than even the rest. He vowed that he had grown out of temper with his Raffaelles since he saw you."

A hearty burst of laughter from Kate, told that this flattery, at least, had gone too far. And now she resumed her seat at the writing-table. It was of the Splugen Pass and Como she had been writing; of the first burst of Italy upon the senses, as, crossing the High Alps, the land of the terraced vine lay stretched beneath. She tried to fall back upon the memory of that glorious scene, as it broke upon her; but it was in vain. Other and far different thoughts had gained the mastery. It was no longer the calm lake, on whose mirrored surface snow-peaks and glaciers were reflected,—it was not of those crags, over which the wild-fig and the olive, the oleander and the mimosa, are spreading, she could think. Other images crowded to her brain; troops of admirers were before her fancy; the hum of adulation filled her ears; splendid *salons*, resounding with delicious music, and a-blaze with a thousand wax lights, rose before her imagination, and her heart swelled with conscious triumph. The transition was most abrupt, then, from a description of scenery and natural objects to a narrative of the actual life of Florence:—

"Up to this, Nelly, we have seen no one, except Mr. Jekyl, whom you will remember as having met at Baden. He dines here several days every week, and is most amusing with his funny anecdotes and imita-

tions, for he knows everybody, and is a wonderful mimic. You'd swear Doctor Grounsell was in the next room if you heard Mr. Jekyl's imitation. There has been some difficulty about an opera-box, for Mr. Jekyl, who manages everybody, will insist upon having Prince Midchekoff's, which is better than the royal box, and has not succeeded. For this reason we have not yet been to the Opera; and, as the Palace has been undergoing a total change of decoration and furniture, there has been no reception here as yet; but on Tuesday we are to give our first ball. All that I could tell you of splendour, my dearest Nelly, would be nothing to the reality of what I see here. Such magnificence in every detail; such troops of servants, all so respectful and obliging, and some dressed in liveries that resemble handsome uniforms! Such gold and silver plate; such delicious flowers everywhere—on the staircase, in the drawing-room—here, actually, beside me as I write. And, oh! Nelly, if you could see my dress! Lace, with bouquets of red camelia, and looped up with strings of small pearls. Think of *me*, of poor Kate Dalton, wearing such splendour! And, strange enough, too, I do not feel awkward in it. My hair, that you used to think I dressed so well myself, has been pronounced a perfect horror; and although I own, it did shock me at first to hear it, I now see that they were perfectly right. Instead of bands, I wear ringlets down to my very shoulders; and Nina tells me there never was such an improvement, as the character of my features requires softening. Such quantities of dress as I have got, too! for there is endless toilette here; and although I'm now growing accustomed to it at first it worried me dreadfully, and left me no time to read. And *à propos* of reading, Lady Hester has given me such a strange book. 'Mathilde,' it is called—very clever, deeply interesting, but not the kind of reading you would like; at least, neither the scenes nor the characters such as you would care for. Of course I take it to be a good picture of life in another sphere from what I have seen myself; and if it be, I must say there is more vice in high society than I believed. One trait of manners, however, I cannot help admiring: the extreme care that every one takes never to give even the slightest offence; not only that the wrong thing is never said, but never even suggested; such a excessive deference to others' feelings bespeaks great refinement, if not higher and better quality. Lady Hester is delightful in this respect. I cannot tell you how the charm of her manner grows into a fascination. Captain Onslow I see little of, but he is always good-humoured and gay; and as for Sir Stafford, he is like a father in the kindliness and affection of his cordiality. Sydney I miss greatly; she was nearly of my own age, and although so much superior to me in every way, so companionable and sister-like. We are to write to each other if she does not return soon. I intended to have said so much about the galleries, but Mr. Jekyl

does quiz so dreadfully about artistic enthusiasm, I am actually ashamed to say a word; besides, to me, Nelly, beautiful pictures impart pleasure less from intrinsic merit, than from the choice of subject and the train of thoughts they originate; and for this reason I prefer Salvator Rosa to all other painters. The romantic character of his scenery, the kind of story that seems to surround his characters, the solemn tranquillity of his moonlights, the mellow splendour of his sunsets, actually heighten one's enjoyment of the realities in nature. I am ashamed to own that Raffaelle is less my favourite than Titian, whose portraits appear to reveal the whole character and life of the individual represented. In Velasquez there is another feature ——" Here came an interruption, for Nina came with gloves to choose, and now arose the difficult decision between a fringe of silver filagree and a deep fall of Valenciennes lace, a question, on both sides of which, Mademoiselle Nina had much to say. In all these little discussions, the mock importance lent to mere trifles at first amused Kate, and even provoked her laughter; but, by degrees, she learned, not only to listen to them with attention, but even to take her share in the consultation. Nina's great art lay in her capacity for adapting a costume to the peculiar style and character of the wearer, and, however exaggerated were some of her notions on this subject, there was always a sufficiency of shrewd sense and good taste in her remarks to overbear any absurdity in her theory. Kate Dalton, whose whole nature had been simplicity and frankness itself, was gradually brought to assume a character with every change of toilette; for if she came down to breakfast in a simple robe of muslin, she changed it for a "costume de paysanne" to walk in the garden; and this again for a species of hunting-dress to ride in the Cascini—to appear afterwards at dinner in some new type of a past age. An endless variety of these devices at last engaging attention, and occupying time, to the utter exclusion of topics more important and interesting.

The letter was now to be resumed; but the clue was lost, and her mind was only fettered with topics of dress and toilette. She walked out upon the terrace to recover her composure; but beneath the window was rolling on that endless tide of people and carriages, that swells up the great flood of a capital city. She turned her steps to another side, and there, in the pleasure-ground, was George Onslow, with a great horse-sheet round him, accustoming a newly-purchased Arabian to the flapping of a riding-skirt. It was a present Sir Stafford had made her the day before. Everything she saw—everything she heard, recalled but one image—herself! The intoxication of this thought was intense. Life assumed features of delight and pleasure she had never conceived possible before. There was an interest imparted to everything, since in everything she had her share. Oh! most insidious of all poisons is that

of egotism, which lulls the conscience by the soft flattery we whisper to ourselves, making us to believe that we are such as the world affects to think us. How ready are we to take credit for gifts that have been merely lent us by a kind of courtesy, and of which we must make restitution when called upon, with what appetite we may.

For the time, indeed, the ecstasy of this delusion is boundless! Who has not, at some one moment or other of his life, experienced the entrancing delight of thinking that the world is full of his friends and admirers, that good wishes follow him as he goes, and kind welcomes await his coming? Much of our character for good or evil, of our subsequent utility in life, or our utter helplessness, will depend upon how we stand the season of trial. Kate Dalton possessed much to encourage this credulity; she was not only eminently handsome, but she had that species of fascination in her air, which a clever French writer defines as the feminine essence, "plus femme que les autres femmes." If a very critical eye might have detected in her manner and address certain little awkwardnesses, a less exacting judgment would have probably been struck with them as attractions, recalling the fact of her youth, her simplicity, and the freshness of her nature. Above all other charms, however, was the radiant happiness that beamed out in every word, and look, and gesture; such a thorough sense of enjoyment—so intense a pleasure in life—is among the very rarest of all gifts.

There was enough of singularity, of the adventurous, in the nature of her position to excel all the romance of her nature; there was more than enough of real splendour around her to give an air of fact and truth, to the highest flights of her imagination. Had she been the sole daughter of the house and name, flatteries and caresses could not have been lavished on her more profusely—her will consulted—her wishes inquired—her taste evoked on every occasion. And yet with all these seductions about her she was not yet spoiled—not yet! Home and its dear associations were ever present to her mind; her humble fortune, and that simple life she used to lead, enforcing lessons of humility not yet distasteful. She could still recur to the memory of the little window that looked over the "Murg," and think the scenery beautiful. Her dear, dear papa was still all she had ever thought him. Nelly was yet the sweet-tempered, gentle, gifted creature she worshipped as a sister; even Hanserl was the kind, quaint emblem of his own dreamy "Vaterland." As yet no conflict had arisen between the past and the present—between the remembrance of narrow fortune and all its crippling exigencies, and the enjoyment of wealth, that seems to expand the generous feelings of the heart. The lustre of her present existence threw, as yet, no sickly light over the bygone—would it might have been always so!

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SMALL SUPPER PARTY.

The great ball at the Mazzarini Palace "came off" just as other great balls have done, and will continue to do, doubtless, for ages hence. There was the usual, perhaps a little more than the usual, splendour of dress and diamonds—the same glare, and crash, and glitter, and crowd, and heat; the same buoyant light-heartedness among the young; the same corroding *ennui* of the old; taste in dress was criticised—looks were scanned—flirtations detected—quarrels discovered—fans were mislaid—hearts were lost—flounces were torn, and feelings hurt. There was the ordinary measure of what people called enjoyment, mixed up with the ordinary proportion of envy, shyness, pretension, sarcasm, coldness, and malice. It was a grand tournament of human passions, in white satin and jewels; and if the wounds exchanged were not as rudely administered, they were to the full as dangerous as in the real lists of combat. Yet, in this mortal conflict, all seemed happy; there was an air of voluptuous abandonment over everything; and whatever cares they might have carried within, as far as appearance went, the world went well and pleasantly with them. The ball was, however, a splendid one: there was everything that could make it such. The *salons* were magnificent in decoration—the lighting a perfect blaze. There was beauty in abundance—diamonds in masses—and a Royal Highness from the Court, an insignificant little man, it is true, with a star and a stutter, who stared at every one, and spoke to nobody. Still he was the centre of a glittering group of handsome aides-de-camp, who displayed their fascinations in every gesture and look.

Apart from the great flood-tide of pleasure—down which so many float buoyantly—there is ever on these occasions a deeper current that flows beneath, of human wile, and cunning, and strategy, just as, in many a German fairy tale, some curious and recondite philosophy lies hid beneath the little incidents related to amuse childhood. It would lead us too far from the path of our story were we to seek for this "tiny thread amid the woof;" enough for our present purpose if we slightly advert to it, by asking our reader to accompany us to the small chamber which called Albert Jekyl master, and where now, at midnight, a little table of three covers was laid for supper. Three flasks of champagne stood in a little ice-pail in one corner, and on a dumb waiter was arrayed a dessert, which, for the season, displayed every charm of rarity; a large bouquet of moss-roses and camelias ornamented the centre of the board, and shed a pleasant odour through the room. The servant

—whose dress and look bespoke him a waiter from a "restaurant" in the neighbourhood—had just completed all the arrangements of the table, placing chairs around it, and heaped fresh wood upon the hearth, when a carriage drew up at the door. The merry sound of voices, and the step of feet were heard on the stairs, and the next moment a lady entered, whose dress of black lace, adorned with bouquets of blue flowers, admirably set off a figure and complexion of Spanish mould and character. To this, a black lace veil fastened to the hair behind, and worn across the shoulders, contributed. There was a lightness and intrepidity in her step as she entered the room that suited the dark, flashing, steady glance of her full black eyes. It would have, indeed, been difficult to trace in that almost insolent air of conscious beauty, the calm, subdued, and almost sorrow-struck girl, whom we have seen as Nina in a former chapter; but, however dissimilar in appearance, they were the same one individual, and the humble *femme de chambre* of Kate Dalton was the celebrated ballet dancer of the great theatre of Barcelona.

The figure which followed was a strange contrast to that light and elegant form. He was an old short man, of excessive corpulence in body, and whose face was bloated and purple by intemperance. He was dressed in the habit of a priest, and was in reality a Canon of the Dome Cathedral. His unwieldy gate, his short and laboured respiration, increased almost to suffocation by the ascent of the stairs, and his cumbrous dress, seemed doubly absurd beside the flippant lightness of the "Ballarina." Jekyl came last, mimicking the old Canon behind his back, and putting the waiter's gravity to a severe test by the bloated expansion of his cheek and the fin-like motion of his hands as he went.

"Ecco me!" cried he out, with a deep grunt, as he sunk into a chair, and wiped the big drops from his forehead with the skirt of his gown.

"You tripped up the stairs like a gazelle, Padre," said the girl, as she arranged her hair before the glass, and disposed the folds of her veil with all the tact of coquetry.

A thick snort, like the ejaculation a hippopotamus might have uttered, was the only reply, and Jekyl, having given a glance over the table to see all was in order, made a sign for Nina to be seated.

"Accursed be the stairs, and he that made them!" muttered the Padre. "I feel as if my limbs had been torn on the rack. I have been three times up the steps of the High Altar already to-day, and am tired as a dog."

"Here is your favourite soup, Padre," said Jekyl, as he moved the ladle through a smoking compound, whence a rich odour of tomato and garlic ascended. "This will make you young again."

"And who said I would wish to be young again," cried the Priest,

angrily. "I have experience of what youth means every day in the confessional, and I promise you, age has the best of it."

"Such a ripe and ruddy age as yours, Padre!" said the girl, with affected simplicity.

"Just so, Minx," rejoined he; "such ripeness as portends falling from the tree! Better even that than to be worm-eaten on the stalk—aye! or a wasp's nest within, girl—you understand me."

"You will never be good friends for half-an-hour together," said Jekyl, as he filled their glasses with champagne, and then touching his own to each, drank off a bumper.

"These are from Savoy, these truffles, and have no flavour," said the Padre, pushing away his plate. "Let me taste that lobster, for this is a half-fast to-day."

"They are like the Priests," said Nina, laughing; "all black without and rotten within!"

"The ball went off admirably last night," interposed Jekyl, to stop what he foresaw might prove a sharp altercation.

"Yes," said Nina, languidly. "The dresses were fresher than the wearers. It was the first time for much of the satin—the same could not be said for many of the company."

"The Balderoni looked well," said Jekyl.

"Too fat—caro mio, too fat!" replied Nina.

"And she has eight penances in the week," grunted out the Canon.

"There's nothing like wickedness for *embonpoint*, Padre," said Nina, laughing.

"Angels always are represented as chubby girls," said the Priest, whose temper seemed to improve as he ate on.

"Midchekoff, I thought, was out of temper all the evening," resumed Jekyl; "he went about with his glass in his eye, seeking for flaws in the lapis lazuli, or retouches in the pictures; and seemed terribly provoked at the goodness of the supper."

"I forgive him all, for not dancing with 'my Lady,' said Nina. "She kept herself disengaged for the Prince, for half the night, and the only reward was, his Russian compliment of, 'What a bore is a ball, when one is past the age of dancing!' "

"Did the Noncio eat much?" asked the Padre, who seemed at once curious and envious about the dignitary.

"He played whist all night," said Jekyl, "and never changed his partner!"

"The old Marchesa Guidotti?"

"The same. You know of that, then, Padre?" asked Jekyl.

A grunt and a nod were all the response.

"What a curious chapter on "La vie privée" of Florence, your reve-

lations might be, Padre," said Jekyl, as if reflectingly. "What a deal of iniquity, great and small, comes to your ears every season."

"What a vast amount of it has its origin in that little scheming brain of thine, Signor Jekyli, and in the fertile wits of your fair neighbour. The unhappy marriages thou hast made—the promising unions thou hast broken—the doubts thou hast scattered here, the dark suspicions there—the rightful distrust thou hast lulled, the false confidences encouraged—Youth! youth! thou hast a terrible score to answer for."

"When I think of the long catalogue of villany you have been listening to, Padre, not only without an effort, but a wish to check;—when every sin recorded, has figured in your ledger, with its little price annexed;—when you have looked out upon the stormy sea of society, as a wrecker ranges his eye over an iron-bound coast in a gale, and thinks of the 'waifs' that soon will be his own;—when, as I have myself seen you, you have looked indulgently down on petty transgressions, that must one day become big sins, and, like a skilful angler, throw the little fish back into the stream, in the confidence that when full-grown you can take them;—when you have done all these things and a thousand more, Padre, I cannot help muttering to myself,—Age, age, what a terrible score thou hast to answer for!"

"I must say," interposed Nina, "you are both very bad company, and that nothing can be in worse taste than this interchange of compliments. You are both right to amuse yourselves in this world as your faculties best point out, but each radically wrong in attributing motives to the other. What, in all that is wonderful, have we to do with motives? I'm sure *I* have no grudges to cherish, no debts of dislike to pay off, anywhere. Any *diablerie I* take part in, is for pure mischief sake. I do think it rather a hard case, that, with somewhat better features, and I know a far shrewder wit than many others, I should perform second and third-rate parts in this great comedy of life, while many without higher qualifications are 'cast for the best characters.' This little score I do try and exact, not from individuals, but the world at large. Mischief with me is the child's pleasure in deranging the chessmen when the players are most intent on the game."

"Now, as to these Onslows—for we must be practical—Padre mio," said Jekyl, "let us see what is to be done with them. As regards matrimony, the real prize has left for England—this Dalton girl may or may not be a 'hit;' some aver that she is heiress to a large estate, of which the Onslows have obtained possession, and that they destine her for the young Guardsman. This must be inquired into. My Lady has 'excellent dispositions,' and may become anything, or everything."

"Let her come to 'the Church,' then," growled out the Canon.

"Gently, Padre, gently," said Jekyl; "you are really too covetous,

and would drag the river always from your own net. We have been generous, hugely generous, to you for the last three seasons, and have made all your converts the pets of society, no matter how small and insignificant their pretensions. The vulgar, have been adopted in the best circles; the ugly, dubbed beautiful; the most tiresome of old maids, have been reissued from the mint as new coinage. We have petted, flattered, and fawned upon those 'interesting Christians,' as the *Tablet* would call them—'till girls began to feel that there were no partners for a polka outside the Church of Rome, and that all the "indulgences" of pleasure, like those of religion, came from the Pope.' We cannot give you the Onslows, or, at least, not yet. We have yet to marry the daughter, provide for the friend, squeeze the son."

"Profligate young villain!—Reach me the champagne, Nina; and, Nina, tell your young mistress, that it is scarcely respectful to come on foot to the mid-day mass; that the clergy of the town like to see the equipages of the rich before the doors of the cathedral, as a suitable homage to the Church. The Onslows have carriages in abundance, and their liveries are gorgeous and splendid!"

"It was her own choice," said Nina; "she is a singular girl for one that never before knew luxury of any kind."

"I hate these simple tastes," growled out the Padre; "they bespeak that obstinacy which people call a 'calm temperament.' Her own dress, too, has no indication of her rank, Nina."

"That shall be cared for, Padre."

"Why shouldn't that young soldier come along with her? Tell him that our choir is magnificent; whisper him that the beautiful Marchesa di Guardoni sits on the very bench beside Miss Dalton."

Nina nodded an assent.

"The young girl herself is lax enough about her duties, Nina; she has not been even once to confession."

"That comes of these English!" cried Nina; "they make our service a constant jest. There is always some vulgar quizzing about saint-worship, or relic reverence, or the secrets of the confessional, going on amongst them."

"Does she permit this?" asked the Priest, eagerly.

"She blushes sometimes occasionally, she smiles with a good-humour meant to deprecate these attacks, and now and then, when the sallies have been pushed too far, I have seen her in tears some hours after."

"Oh, if these heretics would but abstain from ridicule!" cried the Canon. "The least lettered amongst them can scoff, and gibe, and rail. They have their stock subjects of sarcasm, too, handed down from father to son—poor witless, little blasphemies—thefts from Voltaire, who laughed at themselves—and much mischief do they work! Let them begin to

read, however—let them commence to 'inquire,' as the phrase has it, and the game is our own."

"I think, Padre," said Jekyl, "that more of your English converts are made upon principles of pure economy—Popery, like truffles, is so cheap abroad!"

"Away with you! away with you," cried the Padre, rebukingly. "They come to us as the children seek their mother's breast. Hand me the maccaroni."

"Padre mio," broke in Jekyl, "I wish you would be Catholic enough to be less Popish. We have other plots in hand here, beside increasing the funds of the 'Holy Carmelites;' and while we are disputing about the spoil, the game may betake themselves to other hunting-grounds. These Onslows must not be suffered to go hence."

"Albert is right," interposed Nina. "When the 'Midchekoff' condescends to think himself in love with the Dalton girl—when the Guardsman has lost some thousands more than he can pay—when my Lady has offended one-half of Florence, and bullied the other—then, the city will have taken a hold upon their hearts, and you may begin your crusade when you please. Indeed, I am not sure, if the season be a dull one, I would not listen to you myself."

"As you listened once before to the Abbé D'Esmonde," said the Canon, maliciously.

The girl's cheek became deep red, and even over neck and shoulders the scarlet flush spread, while her eyes flashed a look of fiery passion.

"Do you dare—are you insolent enough to ——"

Her indignation had carried her thus far, when, by a sudden change of temper, she stopped, and, clasping her hands over her face, burst into tears.

Jekyl motioned the Priest to be silent, while gently leading the other into the adjoining room, he drew the curtain, and left her alone.

"How could you say that?" said he, "you, Padre, who know that this is more than jest?"

"Spare not the sinner, neither let the stripes be light—'Non sit levis flagella,' says Origen."

"Are the ortolans good, Padre?" asked Jekyl, while his eye glittered with an intense appreciation of the old Canon's hypocrisy.

"They are delicious! succulent, and tender," said the Priest, wiping his lips. "Francesco does them to perfection."

"You at least believe in a cook," said Jekyl, but in so low a voice as to escape the other's notice.

"She is sobbing still," said the Canon, in a whisper, and with a gesture towards the curtained doorway. "I like to hear them gulping down their sighs. It is like the glug-glug of a rich flask of 'Lagrime.'"

"But don't you pity them, Padre?" asked Jekyl, in mock earnestness.

"Never! never! First of all, they do not suffer in all these outbursts. It is but decanting their feelings into another vessel, and they love it themselves! I have had them for hours together thus in the confessional, and they go away after, so relieved in mind, and so light of heart, there's no believing it."

"But Nina," said Jekyl, seriously, "is not one of these."

"She is a woman," rejoined the Padre, "and it is only a priest can read them."

"You see human nature as the physician does, Padre, always in some aspect of suffering. Of its moods of mirth and levity you know less than we do, who pass more butterfly lives!"

"True in one sense, boy; ours are the stony paths—ours are the weary roads in life! I like that Burgundy!"

"It's very pleasant, Padre. It is part of a case I ordered for the Onslows, but their butler shook the bottle when bringing it to table, and they begged me to get rid of it."

"These wines are not suited to Italy generally," said the Canon; "but Florence has the merit of possessing all climates within the bounds of a single day, and even Chambertin is scarcely generous enough, when the Tra-montana is blowing!"

"Well, have you become better mannered? May I venture to come in?" cried Nina, appearing at the doorway.

"'Venga pure!' 'Venga pure!'" growled out the Canon. "I forgive thee everything. Sit down beside me, and let us pledge a friendship for ever."

"There then, let this be a peace-offering," said she, taking the wreath of flowers from her own head and placing it on the brows of the Padre. "You are now like the old Bacchus in the Boboli."

"And thou like——"

"Like what? speak it out!" cried she, angrily.

"Come, come, do, I beseech you, be good friends," interposed Jekyl. "We have met for other objects than to exchange reproaches."

"These are but the 'iræ amantium,' boy," said the Priest; "the girl loves me with her whole heart."

"How you read my most secret thoughts!" said she, with a coquettish affectation of sincerity.

"Lectiones pravissimæ would they be!" muttered he between his teeth.

"What is that? What is he mumbling there, Albert?" cried she, hastily.

"It is a benediction, Nina," replied Jekyl; "did you not hear the Latin?"

Peace was at last restored, and what between the adroit devices of Jekyl and the goodness of his champagne, a feeling of pleasant sociality now succeeded to all the bickering, in which the festivity was prolonged to a late hour. The graver business which brought them together—the Onslows and their affairs—being discussed, they gave way to all the seductions of their exalted fancies. Jekyl, taking up his guitar, warbled out a French love song, in a little treble a bullfinch might have envied; Nina, with the aid of the Padre's beads for castinets, stepped the measure of a bolero; while the old Priest himself broke out into a long chant, in which Ovid, Petrarch, Anacreon, and his breviary, alternately figured, and under the influence of which he fell fast asleep at last, totally unconscious of the corked moustaches and eyebrows with which Nina ornamented his reverend countenance.

The sound of wheels in the silent street at last admonished them of the hour, and opening the window, Jekyl saw a brougham, belonging to Sir Stafford, just drawing up at the door.

"François is punctual," said Nina, "looking at her watch; "I told him five o'clock."

"Had we not better set him down first?" said Jekyl, with a gesture toward the Priest; "he does not live far away."

"With all my heart," replied she; "but you're not going to wash his face?"

"Of course I am, Nina. The jest might cost us far more than it was worth;" and so saying, Jekyl proceeded to arrange the disordered dress and dishevelled hair of the Padre, during the performance of which the old Priest recovered sufficient consciousness to permit himself to be led down stairs and deposited in the carriage.

An hour later and all was still! Jekyl slumbering peacefully on his little French bed, over which the rose-coloured mosquito curtains threw a softened half-sunset hue; a gentle smile parted his lips, as in his dreams—the dreams of a happy and contented nature—he wove pleasant fancies and devised many a future scheme.

In his own dreary little den, behind the "Duomo," the Padre also slept heavily, not a thought, not a single passing idea breaking the stagnant surface of his deep lethargy.

Nina, however, was wakeful, and had no mind for repose. Her brilliant costume carefully laid aside, she was arranging her dark hair into its habitually modest braid; her very features composing themselves, as she did so, into their wonted aspect of gentleness and submission.

All the change of dress being little in comparison with the complete alteration now observable in her whole air and demeanour, she seemed a totally different being. And she was so, too: for while hypocrites to the world, we completely forget that we share in the deception ourselves!

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MIDNIGHT RECEPTION.

It was past midnight, the Opera was just over, and the few privileged guests who were permitted to pay their visits to Lady Hester Onslow were assembling in the little drawing-room and boudoir, sacred to these exclusive receptions. Nothing could be in stronger contrast than the gorgeous splendour of the apartment and the half-dressed, careless, lounging ease of the men as they stretched themselves on the ottomans, lounged on the sofas, or puffed their cigars, alike indifferent to the place and the presence of two ladies who, dressed in the very perfection of "toilette," did the honours of the reception.

Lady Hester, who wore a small embroidered velvet cap, coquettishly set on one side of the head, and a species of velvet jacket, such as is common in Greece, lay upon a sofa beneath a canopy of pink-silk covered with lace; a most splendidly ornamented hooka, the emerald mouth-piece of which she held in her hand, stood on a little cushion beside her; while, grouped around in every attitude that taste or caprice suggested—on chairs, on cushions, squabs, "*prie-dieux*," and other drawing-room devices of a like nature—were some half-dozen men, whose air and bearing pronounced them long habituated to all the usages of society. One stamp of feature and style pervaded all; pale, dark-eyed, black-bearded, and weary-looking, they seemed as though they were tired of a life of dissipation, and yet utterly incapable of engaging in any other.

All, born to high rank, some to large fortune, they found that no other career was open to them, except vice in one shape or other. The policy of their rulers had excluded them from every road of honourable ambition; neither as statesmen nor soldiers could they hope to win fame or glory. Their habits of life and the tone of society gave no impulse to the cultivation of science or literature. The topics discussed in their circle never by chance adverted to a book; and there they were, with heads whose development indicated all that was intellectual, with brows and foreheads that betokened every gift of mental excellence, wearing away life in the dullest imaginable routine of dissipation, their minds neglected, their hearts corrupted, enervated in body, and deprived of all energy of character; they wore, even in youth, the exhausted look of age, and bore in every lineament of their features the type of lassitude and discontent.

In the adjoining room sat Kate Dalton at a tea-table. She was costumed—for we cannot use any milder word—in a species of "moyenâge"

dress, whose length of stomacher and deep-hanging sleeves recalled the portraits of Titian's time; a small cap covered the back of her head, through an aperture in which the hair appeared, its rich auburn masses fastened by a short stiletto of gold, whose hilt and handle were studded with precious stones; a massive gold chain with a heavy cross of the same metal, was the only ornament she wore. Widely different as was the dress from that humble guise in which the reader first knew her, the internal change was even greater still; no longer the bashful, blushing girl, beaming with all the delight of a happy nature, credulous, light-hearted, and buoyant, she was now composed in feature, calm, and gentle mannered; the placid smile that moved her lips, the graceful motion of her head, her slightest gestures, her least words, all displaying a polished ease and elegance, which made even her beauty an attraction secondary to the fascination of her manner. It is true, the generous frankness of her beaming eyes was gone; she no longer met you with a look of full and fearless confidence; the cordial warmth, the fresh and buoyant sallies of her ready wit, had departed, and in their place there was a timid reserve, a cautious, shrinking delicacy, blended with a quiet, but watchful spirit of repartee, that flattered by the very degree of attention it betokened.

Perhaps our reader will not feel pleased with us for saying that she was more beautiful now than before; that, intercourse with the world, dress, manners, the tact of society, the stimulas of admiration, the assured sense of her own charms, however they may have detracted from the moral purity of her nature, had yet invested her appearance with higher and more striking fascinations. Her walk, her curtsey, the passing motion of her hand, her attitude as she sat, were perfect studies of grace. Not a trace was left of her former manner; all was ease, pliancy, and elegance. Two persons were seated near her: one of these, our old acquaintance, George Onslow; the other was a dark, sallow-visaged man, whose age might have been anything from thirty-five to sixty,—for, while his features were marked by the hard lines of time, his figure had all the semblance of youth. By a broad blue ribbon round his neck he wore the decoration of San Nicholas, and the breast of his coat was covered with stars, crosses, and orders of half the courts of Europe. This was Prince Midchikoff, whose grandfather, having taken an active part in the assassination of the Emperor Paul, had never been reconciled to the Imperial family, and was permitted to reside in a kind of honourable banishment out of Russia; a punishment which he bore up under, it was said, with admirable fortitude. His fortune was reputed to be immense, and there was scarcely a capital of Europe in which he did not possess a residence. The character of his face was peculiar,

for, while the forehead and eyes were intellectual and candid, the lower jaw and mouth revealed his Calmuck origin, an expression of intense, unrelenting cruelty being the impression at once conveyed by the thin, straight, compressed lips, and the long projecting chin, seeming even longer from the black-pointed beard he wore. There was nothing vulgar or commonplace about him; he never could have passed unobserved anywhere, and yet he was equally far from the type of high birth. His manners were perfectly well-bred; and, although he spoke seldom, his quiet and attentive air, and his easy smile, showed he possessed the still rarer quality of listening well.

There was another figure, not exactly of this group, but at a little distance off, beside a table in a recess, on which a number of prints and drawings were scattered, and in the contemplation of which he affected to be absorbed; while, from time to time, his dark eyes flashed rapidly across to note all that went forward. He was a tall and singularly handsome man, in the dress of a priest. His hair, black and waving, covered a forehead high, massive, and well-developed; his eyes were deep-set, and around the orbits ran lines that told of long and hard study,—for the Abbé D'Esmonde was a distinguished scholar; and, as a means of withdrawing him for a season from the overtoil of reading, he had been attached temporarily as a species of Under-Secretary to the Mission of the "Nonce." In this guise he was admitted into all the society of the capital, where his polished address and gentle manner soon made him a general favourite.

Equally removed from the flippant levity of the Abbé as a class, and the gross and sensual coarseness of the "old Priest," D'Esmonde was a perfect man of the world, so far as taking a lively interest in all the great events of politics, watching eagerly the changeful features of the times, and studying acutely the characters of the leading men, at whose dictates they were modified. Its pleasures and amusements, too, he was willing to partake of moderately and unobtrusively; but he held himself far apart from all those subjects of gossip and small talk which, in a society of lax morality, occupy so considerable a space, and in which the great dignitaries, who wear scarlet and purple-stockings, are often seen to take a lively and animated share. Some ascribed this reserve to principle; others called it hypocrisy; and some again, perhaps with more truth, deemed it the settled line of action of one who already destined himself for a high and conspicuous station, and had determined that his character should add weight and dignity to his talents.

It might have been thought that he was a singular guest to have been admitted to receptions like the present; but Jekyl, who managed everything, had invited him, on the principle, as he said, that a gourmand has

a decanter of water always beside him at dinner, "not to drink, but because it looks temperate." The Abbé's presence had the same effect; and certainly his calm and dignified demeanour, his polished address, and cultivated tone, were excellent certificates of good character for the rest.

At the tea-table the conversation languished, or only went forward at intervals. Onslow's French was not fluent, and he was silent from shame. Kate felt that she ought not to take the lead; and the Prince, habitually reserved, spoke very little, and even that in the discursive, unconnected tone of a man who was always accustomed to find that any topic he started should be instantly adopted by the company.

The cold and steady stare with which he surveyed her would, but a short time back, have covered her face with a blush; she could not have borne unabashed the glance of searching, almost insolent meaning he bestowed upon her; but now, whatever her heart might have felt, her features were calm and passionless; nor did she in the slightest degree show any consciousness of a manner that was costing Onslow a struggle whether to laugh at, or resent.

In one sense these two men were rivals, but each so impressed with proud contempt for the other, their rivalry was unknown to both. Kate, however, with her woman's tact, saw this, and knew well how her least smile, or slightest word, inclined the balance to this side or to that. The Prince was inveighing against the habit of wintering in Italy as one of the most capital blunders of the age.

"We forget," said he, "that, in our present civilisation, art is always first and nature second, as we see evidenced in all the results of agriculture. It is not the most fertile soil, but the highest-laboured one, which produces the best fruits. So with respect to climate, we never bear in mind, that where nature does most, man always does least."

"According to that rule, Prince, we should winter at St. Petersburg, and spend the dog-days at Calcutta," said Kate, smiling.

"So we should," replied he; "the appliances to resist heat or cold, of man's invention, are far better adapted to enjoyment than the accidental variations of climate."

"In my country," said Onslow, tartly, "men study less how to avoid the inclemencies of weather than to become indifferent to it. Hunting, shooting, and deer-stalking, are very sure methods to acquire this."

The Prince paid no attention to the remark, but turned the conversation into another channel, by asking Kate if she had ever read Fourier's book; from this he wandered away to the characteristic differences of national music; thence to the discoveries then making in Central America; and lastly, engaged her in an animated discussion of the

question of slavery. On none of these points was he deeply or even well informed, but he possessed that fluency and facility which intercourse with society confers; and as all his knowledge was derived from men, and not from books, it bore a certain stamp of originality about it that secured attention. Not, indeed, from George Onslow; he was the most bored of men. None of the topics were his topics. Of Tattersall's, the Guards' Club, the society of London, the odds on the "Derby," he could have discoursed well and pleasantly—from, what was "wrong" with the Sambucca filly, to what was not right with Lady Flutterton's niece, he could have told you everything; but all these other themes were, in his estimation, but sheer pedantry; and, indeed, they only lacked a little knowledge—a very little would have sufficed—to be so.

"He is gone," said the Prince, with a caustic smile which revealed a plan; "gone at last."

"So, then, this was a device of yours, Prince," said she, laughing. "I really must call my cousin back, and tell him so."

"No, no," said he, seriously. "I have won my battle, let me profit by my victory. Let me speak to you on another subject." He drew his chair a little nearer to the table as he spoke, and laid his arm on it. Kate's heart beat fast and full; the colour came and went rapidly in her cheek; a vague sense of fear, of shame, and of triumphant pride were all at conflict within her. There was but one theme in the world that could have warranted such a commencement—so serious, so grave, so purposelike. Was this, then, possible? The glittering stars—all a blaze of brilliants—that shone beside her, seemed an emblem of that high state which was now within her reach; and what a torrent of varied emotions rushed through her heart. Of home, of her father, of Nelly, of Frank, and, lastly, what thoughts of George—poor George—whom she knew loved her, and to whom, without loving, she was not altogether indifferent. "Do not be agitated, Mademoiselle," said the Prince, laying the slightest touch of his jewelled fingers on her arm; "I ask a little patience, and a little calm consideration, for what I am about to say."

"Is that really like an Irish peasant's cottage, Miss Dalton?" said the Abbé, as he held before her a drawing of one, in all the details of its most striking misery.

"Yes, perfectly—not exaggerated in the least," said she, hurriedly, blushing alike at the surprise and the interruption.

"You have no such misery, Monsieur le Prince, in Russia, I believe?" remarked the Priest, with a courteous bend of the head.

"We are well governed, Sir; and nothing displays it more palpably than that no man forgets his station," said the Prince, with an insolent

hauteur that made Kate blush over neck and forehead, while D'Esmonde stood calm and passionless under the sarcasm.

"So I have always heard, Sir," said he, blandly. "I remember, when at Wredna——"

"You have been at Wredna?" asked the Prince, in an altered voice.

But the other, not heeding the interruption, went on.

"I remember, when at Wredna, to have heard an anecdote, which strikingly illustrates the rigid obedience yielded to power, and the condition of public opinion at the same time. A manumitted slave, who was raised to high rank and wealth by the favour of the Czar, had returned to Wredna in the capacity of Governor. A short time after his arrival, he was tormented by applications and letters from a woman in great poverty, who asserted that she was his mother. Fedeorovna, of course, in secret proved the truth of her assertion, but the only answer she received was a significant caution to be silent, and not appeal to a relationship which could only prove offensive. Perhaps, incredulous of the authentic character of so cruel a reply—perhaps, stung to angry indignation by it, she carried the humble basket of fruit and vegetables that she hawked for a livelihood before the door of the great mansion where her son resided, but, instead of advertising her wares, as is customary in these Muscovite markets, by some picture of a saint or some holy inscription, she carried a little placard, with the inscription—'The Mother of Alexovitch,' the name of the Governor. A crowd soon gathered around this singular booth, heralded by so strange an announcement, and as speedily the police resorted to the spot, and carried the offender before the Judge. The defence was the simple one—that she had merely averred the truth. I need not weary you with the mockery of investigation that followed, the result is all I need tell. This woman was knouted and sent away to Siberia. So much for the Governor. As for the governed, they were enthusiastic in praise of his justice and clemency; for he might have ordered her to be beheaded."

"Do you tell the story as a fact, Sir?" said the Prince, whose dark cheek became almost green in its sallowness as he spoke.

"I tell it distinctly as a fact. The Papa who received the woman's confession repeated the tale on his own deathbed, from whence it reached me."

"Priests can be liars, whether Greek or Roman," said the Prince, in a voice almost suffocated with passion; and then, suddenly checking the course of his anger, he turned to Kate with a sickly smile, and said—"Mademoiselle will pardon a rudeness in her presence which nothing short of so gross a calumny could have elicited."

"I will furnish you with all the names to-morrow, Monsieur le

Prince," said D'Esmonde, in a whisper; and sauntered away into the adjoining room.

"You look pale, Miss Dalton," said the Prince.

"That shocking story——"

"Which of course you don't believe."

"The Abbé D'Esmonde I have always heard to be a person of strict veracity and of extreme caution."

"Be careful of him, Miss Dalton. It is not without good reason that I say this."

There was a degree of solemnity in the way he uttered these words that made Kate thoughtful and serious. Unaccustomed to see in society anything but features of pleasure and amusement, she was suddenly awakened to the conviction that its calm waters covered rocks and quicksands as perilous as stormier seas. Could people so full of amiabilities be dangerous acquaintances?—was there poison in this charmed cup?—was the doubt which sprung to her mind; but she had not time for the inquiry, as the Prince offered her his arm to the supper-room.

CHAPTER XXV.

A "LEVANTER."

In our penal settlements, nothing is more common than to find the places of honour and distinction filled by men who were once convicts, and who may date the favourable turn of their fortune to the day of their having transgressed the law! so in certain continental cities are individuals to be found occupying conspicuous stations and enjoying a large share of influence, whose misdeeds at home first made them exiles, and who, leaving England in shame, are received abroad with honour. There is this difference between the two cases: for while the convict owes all his future advancement to his own efforts at reformation, the absentee obtains his "brevet" of character by the simple fact of his extradition. He shakes off his rascalities as he does his rheumatism, when he quits the foggy climate of England and emerges, spotless and without stain, upon the shores of Ostend or Boulogne.

To do this, however, he must not bear a plebeian name, nor pertain to the undistinguishable herd of vulgar folk. He must belong to some family of mark and note, with Peers for his uncles and Peeresses for cousins; nor is he always safe if he himself be not a member of an hereditary legislature. We have been led to these reflections by having to chronicle the arrival in Florence of Lord Norwood; a vague and confused murmur of his having done something, people knew not what, in England

having preceded him. Some called him poor "Norwood," and expressed sorrow for him; others said he was a capital fellow, up to everything, and that they were delighted at his coming. A few, of very tender and languishing virtue themselves, wondered if they ought to meet him as before, but the prevailing impression was charitable. The affair at Graham's might have been exaggerated, the Newmarket business was possibly a mistake. "Any man might owe money, and not be able to pay it," was a sentiment pretty generally repeated and as generally believed, and, in fact, if to be tried by one's peers be an English privilege, the noble Viscount here enjoyed it at the hands of a jury unimpeachable on the score of equality.

We are far from suggesting that Norwood's character as a "shot" had any concern with this mild verdict; but, certain it is, his merits in this capacity were frequently remembered, and always with honourable mention.

"No man plays *ecarté* better!" said Haggerstone, while as yet the Viscount's arrival was unknown; and, as he discussed the rumours upon him before a group of listening Englishmen, at the door of the "Club," "No man plays *ecarté* better—nor with better luck!" added he, in a chuckle that was intended to convey a meaning beyond the mere words.

"Has he been a large winner, then?" asked one of the bystanders respectfully, looking to the Colonel for information—for, in a certain set, he was regarded as the most thoroughly conversant man with all the faults and follies of high life.

"No man wins invariably, Sir, except Brooke Morris, perhaps," replied he, always happy at the opportunity to quote the name of a man of fashion in a tone of familiarity.

"That was the Mo—Mo—Morris that ruined Hopeton, wasn't it?" broke in Purvis, quite forgetting that the individual he addressed was reported to have a share in the transaction. Haggerstone, however, did not deign a reply, but puffed his cigar in perfect contempt of his questioner.

"Who is this coming up here?" said one; "he looks like a new arrival. He is English, certainly,—that frock has a London cut—there's no mistaking."

"By Jove! it's Norwood," cried Haggerstone, edging away, as he spoke, from the group. Meanwhile the noble Viscount, a well-dressed, well-whiskered man, of about thirty, came leisurely forward, and touching his hat familiarly, said,

"Ha! you here, Haggerstone,—what is Florence doing?"

"Pretty much as it always did, my Lord. I don't think its morals have improved since you knew it a few years ago."

"Or you wouldn't be here, Haggy—eh?" said the Viscount, laughing at his own joke. "Not suit your book, if it took a virtuous turn—eh?"

"I plead guilty, my Lord. I believe I do like to shoot folly as it flies."

"Ah, yes! And I've seen you taking a sitting shot at it too, Haggy," said the other, with a heartier laugh, which, despite of the Colonel's efforts not to feel, brought a crimson flush to his cheek.

"Is there any play going on, Haggy?"

"Nothing that you would call play, my Lord; a little whist for Nap. points, a little *écarte*, a little piquet, and, now and then, we have a round game at Sabloukoff's."

"Poor old fellow! and he's alive still? And where's the Jariominski?"

"Gone back to Russia."

"And Maretti?"

"In Saint Angelo, I believe."

"And that little Frenchman—what was his name?—his father was a Marshal of the Empire."

"D'Acosta."

"The same. Where is he?"

"Shot himself this spring."

"Pretty girl, his sister. What became of her?"

"Some one told me that she had become a Sœur de Charité."

"What a pity. So they're all broken up, I see."

"Completely so."

"Then what have you got in their place?"

"Nothing fast, my Lord, except, perhaps, your friends the Onslows."

"Yes; they're going it, I hear. Isn't there a rich niece, or cousin, or something of that sort with them?"

"They've got a prettyish girl, called Dalton; but as to her being rich, I think it very unlikely, seeing that her family are living in Germany in a state of the very closest poverty."

"And Master George, how does he carry on the war?" said the Viscount, who seemed quite heedless of the other's correction.

"He plays a little peddling *écarte* now and then; but you can see that he has burned his fingers, and dreads the fire. They say he's in love with the Dalton girl."

"Of course he is, if they live in the same house; and he's just the kind of fool to marry her, too. Who's that little fellow, listening to us?"

"Purvis, my Lord; don't you remember him? He's one of the Ricketts' set."

"To be sure I do. How are you, Purvis? You look so young and so fresh, I could not persuade myself it could be my old acquaintance."

"I've taken to homœ—homœ—homœ—homœ——" Here he opened his mouth wide, and gasped till he grew black in the face.

"What's the word? Give it him, Haggy. It's all up with him," said the Viscount.

"Homœopathy—eh?"

"Just so. Homœ—homœ——"

"Confound it, man, can't you be satisfied; when you're once over the fence you needn't go back to leap it. And how is the dear—what's her name—Agathe?—no, Zoe—how is she?"

"Quite well, my Lord, and would be cha—cha—cha—rmed to see you."

"Living in that queer humbug still—eh?"

"In the Vill—ino, my Lord, you mean?"

"Egad! she seems the only thing left; like the dog on the wreck. Eh, Haggy?"

"Just so, my Lord," said the other, with a complacent laugh.

"What a mass of old crockery she must have got together by this time," said the Viscount, yawning with a terrible recollection of her tiresomeness.

"You came out with a yacht, my Lord?" asked Haggerstone.

"Pretty well, for a man that they call ru—ru—ruined," said Purvis, laughing.

Norwood turned a look of angry indignation at him, and then, as if seeing the unworthiness of the object, merely said—

"A yacht is the only real economy now-a-days. You get rid at once of all trains of servants, household, stable people—even the bores of your acquaintance you cut off. By—bye, Purvis." And, with a significant wink at Haggerstone, he passed across the street, in time to overtake Onslow, who was just passing.

"I think I ga—ga—gave it him there," cried Purvis, with a hysteric giggle of delight; who, provided that he was permitted to fire his shot, never cared how severely he was himself riddled by the enemy's fire. Meanwhile, the Viscount and his friend were hastening forward to the Mazzarini Palace, as totally forgetful of Purvis as though that valuable individual had never existed.

We may take this opportunity to mention, that when the rumours which attributed a grand breach of honourable conduct to Lord Norwood had arrived at Florence, Sir Stafford, who never had any peculiar affection for the Viscount, declared himself in the very strongest terms on the subject of his offending, and took especial pains to show the

marked distinction between occasions of mere wasteful extravagance and instances of fraudulent and dishonest debt.

It was in vain he was told that the rigid rule of English morality is always relaxed abroad, and that the moral latitude is very different in London and Naples. He was old-fashioned enough to believe that honour is the same in all climates; and having received from England a very detailed and specific history of the noble Lord's misdoings, he firmly resolved not to receive him.

With all George Onslow's affection and respect for his father, he could not help feeling that this was a mere prejudice—one of the lingering remnants of a past age; a sentiment very respectable, perhaps, but totally inapplicable to present civilisation, and quite impracticable in society. In fact, as he said himself, "who is to be known, if this rule be acted on?" What man, or, further still, what woman of fashionable life will stand this scrutiny! To attempt such exclusiveness, one should retire to some remote provincial town—some fishing village of patriarchal simplicity; and, even there, what security was there against gnoble offendings? How should he stand the ridicule of his club and his acquaintance, if he attempted to assume such a standard? These arguments were strengthened by his disbelief, or rather his repugnance to believe the worst of Norwood; and furthermore, supported by Lady Hester's open scorn for all such "hypocritical trumpery," and her avowal that the Viscount should be received, by *her*, at least. Exactly, as of old, George Onslow's mind was in a state of oscillation and doubt—now, leaning to this side, now, inclining to that—when the question was decided for him, as it so often is in like cases, by a mere accident; for, as he loitered along the street, he suddenly felt an arm introduced within his own; he turned hastily round, and saw Norwood, who, with all his customary coolness, asked after each member of the family, and at once proposed to pay them a visit.

Of all men living, none were less suited than Onslow for assuming any part, or taking any decisive line, which could possibly be avoided, or even postponed. He hated, besides, to do an ungracious thing anywhere, or to any one. It might be, thought he, that Norwood's scrape could all be explained away. Perhaps, after all, the thing is a mere trifle; and if he were to take the decided line of cutting a man without due cause, the consequences might be most injurious. These, and fifty such like scruples, warred within him, and so engaged his attention, that he actually heard not one word of all that "town gossip" which Norwood was retailing for his amusement. At last, while following out his own thoughts, George came to the resolution of finding out, at once, the

precise position in which Norwood stood, and to this end asked the last news from Newmarket.

Norwood's coolness never forsook him, at a question whose very suddenness was somewhat awkward.

"Bad enough," said he, with an easy laugh. "We have all of us been 'hit hard.' Knolesby has lost heavily. Burchester, too, has had a smasher; and I myself have not escaped. In fact, George, the 'Legs' have had it all their own way. I suppose you heard something about it out here?"

"Why, yes; there were reports——"

"Oh, hang reports, man. Never trust to old women's tales. And that confounded fellow Haggerstone, I'm certain, has been spreading all kinds of stories. But the facts are simple enough."

"I'm heartily glad you say so; for, to tell you the truth, Norwood, my father is one of the prejudiced about this affair, and I am dying to be able to give him a full explanation of the whole."

"Ah! Sir Stafford, too, among the credulous!" said Norwood, slowly. "I could scarcely have supposed so. No matter; only I did fancy that he was not exactly the person to form hasty conclusions against any man's character. However, you may tell him—for, as for myself, I'll not condescend to explain to any one but you—the thing is a very simple one. There was a mare of Hopeton's, a Brockdon filly, entered for the Slingsby, and a number of us agreed to 'go a heavy thing' upon her against the field. A bold *coup* always, George, that backing against the field. Never do it, my boy, and particularly when you've a set of rascally foreign Legs banded against you—Poles and Hungarian fellows, George, the downiest coves ever you met, and who, in their confounded jargon, can sell you before your own face. Nothing like John Bull, my boy. Straight, frank, and open John for ever! Hit him hard, and he'll hit you again; but no treachery, no stab in the dark. Oh, no, no! The turf in England was another thing before these Continental rascals came amongst us. I was always against admitting them within the ring. I black-balled a dozen of them at the Club. But see what perseverance does; they're all in now. There's no John Bull feeling among our set, and we're paying a smart price for it. Never trust those German fellows, George. Out of England there is no truth, no honour. But, above all, don't back against the field; there are so many dodges against you; so many 'dark horses' come out fair. That's it, you see; that's the way I got it so heavily; for when Ruxton came and told me that "Help-me-Over" was dead lame, I believed him. A fetlock lameness is no trifle, you know; and there was a swelling as large as my hand around the coronet. The foreign fellows can manage that in

the morning, and the horse will run to win the same day. I saw it myself. Ah, John Bull for ever! No guile, no deceit in him. Mind me, George, I make this confession for you alone. I'll not stoop to repeat it. If any man dare to insinuate anything to my discredit, I'll never give myself the trouble of one word of explanation, but nail him to it—twelve paces, and no mistake. I don't think my right hand has forgot its cunning. Have him out at once, George; parade him on the spot, my boy; that's the only plan. What, is this your quarter?" asked he, as they stopped at the entrance of the spacious palace. I used to know this house well of old. It was the Embassy in Templeton's time. Very snug it used to be. Glad to see you've banished all those maimed old deities that used to line the staircase, and got rid of that tiresome tapestry, too. Pretty vases those—fresh-looking that conservatory—they're always strong in camelias in Florence. This used to be the billiard-room; I think you've made a good alteration; it looks better as a *salon*. Ah! I like this—excellent taste that chintz furniture—just the thing for Italy, and exactly what nobody ever thought of before!"

"I'll see if my Lady be visible," said George, as he threw the *Morning Post* to his friend, and hastily quitted the chamber.

Norwood was no sooner left alone, than he proceeded to take a leisurely survey of the apartment, in the course of which his attention was arrested by a water-colour drawing, representing a young girl leaning over a balcony, and which he had no difficulty in at once guessing to be Kate Dalton. There was something in the character of her beauty—an air of almost daring haughtiness—that seemed to strike his fancy, for, as he gazed, he drew himself up to his full height, and seemed to assume in his own features the proud expression of the portrait.

"With a hundred thousand and that face, one might make you a Viscountess, and yet not do badly either!" said he to himself; and then, as if satisfied that he had given time enough to a mere speculative thought, he turned over the visiting cards, to see the names of the current acquaintance—"Midchikoff, Estrolenka, Janini, Tiverton, Latrobe—the old set; the Ricketts, too, and Haggerstone. What can have brought them here? Oh! there must have been a ball; for here are shoals of outsiders—the great Smith-Brown-and-Thompson community; and here, on the very smallest of pasteboards, in the very meekest of literals, have we our dear friend 'Albert Jekyl.' He'll tell me all I want to know," said Norwood, as he threw himself back on the comfortable depth of a well-cushioned chair, and gave way to a pleasant reverie.

When George Onslow had informed Lady Hester of Norwood's

arrival, he hastened to Sir Stafford's apartment, to tell him how completely the Viscount had exonerated himself from any charge that might be made to his discredit; not, indeed, that George understood one syllable of the explanation, nor could trace anything like connexion between the disjointed links of the narrative; he could only affirm his own perfect conviction in Norwood's honour, and hope an equal degree of faith from his father. Fortunately for his powers of persuasiveness, they were not destined to be so sorely tried, for Sir Stafford had just walked out, and George, too eager to set all right about Norwood, took his hat and followed, in the hope of overtaking him.

Lady Hester was already dressed, and about to enter the drawing-room, when George told her that Norwood was there; and yet she returned to her room, and made some changes in her toilet, slight, and perhaps too insignificant to record, but yet of importance enough to occupy some time, and afford her an interval for thoughts which, whatever their nature, served to flush her cheek and agitate her deeply.

It is an awkward thing at any time to meet with the person to whom you once believed you should have been married—to see, on the terms of mere common acquaintance, the individual with whose fate and fortune you at one time fancied your own was indissolubly bound up, for weal or woe, for better or for worse. To exchange the vapid commonplaces of the world—to barter the poor counters of that petty game called society with her or him with whom you have walked, in all the unbounded confidence of affection, speculating on a golden future, or glorying in a delicious dream of present bliss—to touch with ceremonious respect that hand you have so often held fast within your own—to behold with respectful distance that form beside which you have sat for hours, lost in happy fancies—to stand, as it were, and trace out with the eye some path in life we might have followed, wondering whither it would have led us, if to some higher pinnacle of gratified ambition, if to disappointments darker than those we have ever known; speculating on a future which is already become a past, and canvassing within our hearts the follies that have misled and the faults that have wrecked us! Such are among the inevitable reminiscences of meeting; and they are full of a soft and touching sorrow, not all unpleasing either, as they remind us of our youth and its buoyancy. Far otherwise was the present case. Whatever might have been the bold confidence with which Lady Hester protested her belief in Norwood's honour, her own heartfelt knowledge of the man refuted the assertion. She knew thoroughly that he was perfectly devoid of all principle, and merely possessed that conventional degree of fair dealing indispensable to association with his equals. That he would do anything short of what would subject him to disgrace she

had long seen; and perhaps the unhappy moment had come, when even this restraint was no longer a barrier. And yet, with all this depreciating sense of the man, would it be believed, that she had once loved him!—aye, with as sincere an affection as she was capable of feeling for anything.

'Tis true, time and its consequences had effaced much of this feeling—his own indifference had done something—her new relations with the world had done more; and if she ever thought of him now, it was with a degree of half terror, that there lived one man who had so thoroughly read all the secrets of her heart, and knew every sentiment of her nature.

Norwood was sitting in a chair as she entered, amusing himself with the gambols of a little Blenheim spaniel, whose silver collar bore the coronet of the Russian Prince. He never perceived Lady Hester until she was close beside him, and in an easy, half indifferent tone, said—

"How d'ye do, my Lord?"

"What, Hester!" said he, starting up, and taking her hand in both his own.

She withdrew it languidly, and seating herself, not upon the sofa to which he wished to lead her, but in a chair, asked when he had arrived, and by what route.

"I came out in a yacht; stopping a few days at Gibraltar, and a week at Malta."

"Had you pleasant weather?"

"After we got clear of the Channel, excellent weather."

"You came alone, I suppose?"

"Quite alone."

"How do you get on without your dear friend Effingdale, or your 'familiar,' Upton?"

Norwood coloured a little at a question the drift of which he felt thoroughly, but tried with a laugh to evade an answer.

"Are they in England? I thought I read their names at the Newmarket meeting?" asked she, after waiting in vain for a reply.

"Yes; they were both at Newmarket," replied he, shortly.

"Was it a good meeting?"

"I can scarcely say so," rejoined he, attempting a laugh. "*My* book turned out very unfortunately."

"I heard so," was the short reply; and in a tone so dry and significant, that a dead silence followed.

"Pretty spaniel, that," said Norwood, trying a slight *sortie* into the enemy's camp. "A present, I suppose, from Midchikoff?"

"Yes."

"It is not clean bred, however, no more than his late master. Have you seen much of the Prince?"

"He comes here every evening after the Opera.

"What a bore that must be—he is a most insufferable prose."

"I must say I disagree with you. I reckon him exceedingly agreeable

"How changed you must be, Hes—, Lady Hester."

"I believe I am, my Lord."

"And yet you look the same—the very same as when we sauntered for hours through the old woods at Dipsley." She blushed deeply; but, perhaps, at the words, than at the look which accompanied them.

"Is this your newly-found niece, or cousin?" said Norwood, as he pointed to the portrait of Kate Dalton.

"Yes. Isn't she pretty?"

"The picture is."

"She is much handsomer, however—a charming creature in every respect—as you will confess, when you see her."

"And for what high destiny is she meant? Is she to be a Russian Princess, a Duchess of Italy, or the good wife of an untitled Englishman?"

"She may have her choice, I believe, of either of the three."

"Happy girl!" said he, half scornfully; "and when may I hope to behold so much excellence?"

"To-day, if you like to dine here."

"I should like it much—but—but——"

"But what?"

"It's better to be frank at once, Hester," said he, boldly, "and say, that I feel you are grown very cold and distant toward me. This is not your old manner, this not exactly the reception I looked for. Now, if you have any cause for this, would it not be better and fairer to speak it out openly, than continue to treat me in this slighting fashion? You are silent—so, there is something. Pray let's hear it."

"What of Newmarket?" said she, in a low voice, so faint as almost to be a whisper.

"So, that's it," said he, as he folded his arms and looked steadfastly at her.

There was something in the cold and steady gaze he bestowed upon her that abashed, if not actually alarmed, Lady Hester. She had seen the same look once or twice before, and always as the prelude to some terrible evidence of his temper.

"Lady Hester," said he, in a low, distinct, and very slow voice, as though he would not have her lose a word he spoke; "the explanation which a man would ask for at the peril of his life, ought not, in common justice, to be quite costless to a lady. It is perfectly possible that you may not care for the price, be it so; only I warn you, that if you

wish for any information on the subject you allude to, *I* will inquire whether ——"

Here he dropped his voice, and whispered two or three words rapidly in her ear; after which she lay back, pale, sick, and almost fainting, without strength to speak or even to move.

"Do not say, or still less feel, that this contest is of my provoking. Never was any man less in the humour to provoke hostilities, and particularly from old friends. I have just had bad luck—the very worst of bad luck. I have lost everything but my head; and even that, cool and calculating as it is, may go, too, if I be pushed too far. Now you have a frank and free confession from me. I have told you more than I would to any other living; more, perhaps, than I ought even to you."

"Then what do you intend to do here?" asked she, faintly.

"Wait—wait patiently for a while; fix upon any one that I can discover mutters a syllable to my discredit, and shoot him as I would a dog."

"There may be some who, without openly discussing, will shun your society, and avoid your intercourse."

"Sir Stafford, for instance," said he, with an insolent laugh. She nodded slightly, and he went on. "My Lady's influence will, I'm certain, set me right in that quarter."

"I may be unequal to the task!"

"You can at least try, Madam."

"I have tried, Norwood. I have gone the length of declaring that I disbelieved every story against you,—that I reposed the most implicit faith in your honour,—and that I would certainly receive you, and admit your visits as heretofore."

"And, of course, you'll keep your word?"

"If you exact it——"

"Of course I shall! Hester, this is no time for quibbling. I've got into a mess,—the worst of all the bad scrapes which have ever befallen me. A little time and a little management will pull me through,—but I must have both; nor is it in such a place, and with such a society as this, a man need fear investigation. I came here, as formerly one went, to live 'within the rules.' Let me, at least, have the benefit of the protection for condescending to the locality."

"Sir Stafford, my Lady," said a servant, throwing open the door; and the old Baronet entered hastily, and, without deigning to notice Lord Norwood, walked straight up to Lady Hester, and said a few words in a low voice.

Affecting to occupy himself with the books upon the table, Norwood

watched the dialogue with keen but stealthy glances, and then, as the other turned suddenly round, said,

"How d'ye do, Sir Stafford? I am glad to see you looking so well."

"I thank you, my Lord, I am perfectly well," said he, with a most repelling coldness.

"You are surprised to see me in Florence, for certain," said the other, with a forced laugh.

"Very much surprised to see you *here*, my Lord," was the abrupt reply.

"Ha! ha! ha! I thought so!" cried Norwood, laughing, and pretending not to feel the point of the remark. "But, now-a-days, one flits about the world in slippers and dressing-gown, and travelling inflicts no fatigue. I only left England ten days ago."

"The post comes in seven, my Lord," said Sir Stafford; "I have had letters this morning, written this day week, and which give the last events in Town Life up to the very hour."

"Indeed! and what's the news, then?" said he, negligently.

"If your Lordship will favour me with your company for a few minutes, I may be able to enlighten you," said Sir Stafford, moving towards the door.

"With the greatest pleasure. Good-bye," Lady Hester, said he, rising; "you said seven o'clock dinner, I think."

"Yes," replied she; but in a voice almost inarticulate, from shame and terror.

"Now, Sir Stafford, I'm at your orders," said the Viscount, gaily, as he left the room, followed by the old man, whose crimson cheek and flashing eye bespoke the passion which was struggling within him.

Of the two who now entered Sir Stafford's library, it must be owned that Lord Norwood was, by many degrees, the more calm and collected. No one, to have looked at him, could possibly have supposed that any question of interest, not to say of deep moment, awaited him; and as he carried his eyes over the well-filled shelves and the handsome fittings of the chamber, nothing could be more naturally spoken than the few complimentary expressions on Sir Stafford's good taste and judgment.

"I shall not ask you to be seated, my Lord," said the old Baronet, whose tremulous lip and shaking cheek showed how deep-felt was his agitation. "The few moments of interview I have requested will be, I have no doubt, too painful to either of us; nor could we desire to prolong them. To me, I own, they are very, very painful."

These hurried, broken, and unconnected sentences, fell from him as he searched for a letter among a number of others that littered the table.

Lord Norwood bowed coldly, and, without making any reply, turned his back to the fire, and waited in patience.

"I have, I fear, mislaid the letter," said Sir Stafford, whose nervous anxiety had now so completely mastered him, that he threw the letters and papers on every side without perceiving it.

The Viscount made no sign, but suffered the search to proceed without remark.

"It was a letter from Lord Effingdale," continued the Baronet, still busied in the pursuit; "a letter written after the Newmarket settling, my Lord; and, if I should be unfortunate enough not to find it, I must only trust to my memory for its contents."

Lord Norwood gave another bow, slighter and colder than the former, as though to say that he acquiesced perfectly, without knowing in what.

"Ah! here it is! here it is!" cried Sir Stafford, at last detecting the missing document, which he hastily opened and ran his eyes over. "This letter, my Lord," continued he, "announces that, in consequence of certain defalcations on your part, the members of the 'Whip Club' have erased your Lordship's name from their list, and declared you incapacitated from either entering a horse, or naming a winner for the stakes in future. There, there, my Lord, is the paragraph, coupled with what you will doubtless feel to be a very severe, but just comment on the transaction."

Norwood took the letter and read it leisurely—as leisurely and calmly as though the contents never concerned him, and then, folding it up, laid it on the chimney-piece beside him.

"Poor Effingdale!" said he, smiling; "he ought to spell better, considering that his mother was a governess. He writes '*naming*' with an 'e.' Didn't you remark that?"

But, as Sir Stafford paid no attention to the criticism, he went on.

"As to the 'Whip,' I may as well tell you, that I scratched my own name, myself. They are a set of low 'Legs,' and, except poor Effy and two or three others of the same brilliant stamp, not a gentleman amongst them."

"The defalcation is, however, true?" asked Sir Stafford.

"If you mean to ask whether a man always wins at Doncaster or Newmarket, the question is of the easiest to answer."

"I certainly presume that he always pays what he loses, my Lord," replied Sir Stafford, colouring at the evasive impertinence of the other.

"Of course he does, when he has it! Sir Stafford; but that is a most essential condition, for the 'Turf' is not precisely like a mercantile pursuit."

Sir Stafford winced under the flippant insolence with which this was spoken.

"There is not exactly a fair way to calculate profit, nor any insurance against accidental loss. A horse, Sir Stafford, is not an Indiaman; a betting man is, therefore, in a position quite exceptional."

"If a man risks what he cannot pay, he is dishonourable," said Sir Stafford, in a short, abrupt tone.

"I see that you cannot enter into a theme so very different from all your habits and pursuits. You think there is a kind of bankruptcy when a man gets a little behind with his bets. You don't see that all these transactions are on 'honour,' and that if one does 'bolt,' he means to 'look up' another time. There was George, your own son——"

"What of him?—what of George?" cried Sir Stafford, with a convulsive grasp of the chair, while all the colour fled from his cheek, and he seemed ready to faint with emotion.

"Oh, nothing in the world to cause you uneasiness. A more honourable fellow never breathed than George."

"Then, what of him? How comes his name to your lips at such a discussion as this? Tell me, this instant, my Lord. I command—I entreat you!"

And the old man shook like one in an ague; but Norwood saw his 'vantage ground, and determined to use it unsparingly. He therefore merely smiled, and said—

"Pray be calm, Sir Stafford. I repeat, that there is nothing worthy of a moment's chagrin. I was only about to observe, that if I had the same taste for scandal-writing as poor Effy, I might have circulated a similar story about your son George. He left England, owing me a good round sum, for which, by the way, I was terribly 'hard up;' and although the money was paid eventually, what would you have thought of *me*—what would the world have thought of *him*—if I had written such an epistle as this?"

And, as he spoke, his voice and manner warmed into a degree of indignant anger, in which, as if carried away, he snatched the letter from the chimney-piece and threw it into the fire. The act was unseen by Sir Stafford, who sat with his head deeply buried between his hands, a low faint groan alone bespeaking the secret agony of his heart.

"My son has, then, paid you? He owes nothing, my Lord?" said he, at last looking up, with a countenance furrowed by agitation.

"Like a trump!" said Norwood, assuming the most easy and self-satisfied manner. "My life upon George Onslow! Back him to any amount, and against the field anywhere! A true John Bull!—no humbug, no nonsense about *him!*—straightforward and honourable, always!"

"Your position is, then, this, my Lord," said Sir Stafford, whose impa-

ence would not permit him to listen longer; "you have quitted England, aving for future settlement a number of debts, for which you have not he remotest prospect of liquidation."

"Too fast—you go too fast!" said the Viscount, laughing.

"Lord Effingdale writes the amount at thirty thousand pounds, and dds that, as a defaulter——"

"There's the whole of it," broke in Norwood. "You ring the hanges about that one confounded word, and there is no use in attempting a vindication. 'Give a dog a bad name,' as the adage says. Now, took the trouble this very morning to go over the whole of this tiresome business with George. I explained to him fully, and, I hope, to is entire satisfaction, that I was simply unfortunate in it—nothing more. A man cannot alway 'ride the winner;' I'm sure I wish *I* could. Of course, I don't meant to say that it's not a confounded 'bore' to come ut here and live in such a place as this, and just at the opening of the eason, too, when Town is beginning to fill; but, 'needs must,' we are old, 'when a certain gent sits on the coach-box.'"

Sir Stafford stood, during the whole of this speech, with his arms folded nd his eyes fixed upon the floor. He never heard one word of it, but as deeply intent upon his own thoughts. At length he spoke in a full, ollected, and firm voice:

"Lord Norwood—I am, as you have told me, perfectly unfitted to ronounce upon transactions so very unlike every pursuit in which my ife has been passed. I am alike ignorant of the feelings of those who ngage in them, and of the rules of honour by which they are guided; ut this I know, that the man whom his equals decline to associate with t home, is not recognizable abroad; and that he who leaves his country ith shame, cannot reside away from it with credit."

"This would be a very rude speech, Sir Stafford Onslow, even with he palliative preface of your ignorance, if our relative ages admitted ny equality between us. I am the least bellicose of men—I believe I an say I may afford to be so. So long, therefore, as you confine such entiments to yourself, I will never complain of them; but if the time omes that you conceive they should be issued for general circulaion——"

"Well, my Lord, what then?"

"Your son must answer for it—that's all!" said Norwood; and he rew himself up, and fixed his eye steadily on the distant wall of the oom, with a look and gesture that made the old man sick at heart.

Norwood saw how "his shot told," and, turning hastily round, said,

"This interview, I conclude, has lasted quite long enough for either of

us. If you have any further explanations to seek for, let them come through a younger man, and in a more regular form. Good morning."

Sir Stafford bowed, without speaking, as the other passed out.

To have seen them both at that moment, few would have guessed aright on which side lay all the disgrace, and where the spirit of suicide and honour.

Sir Stafford, indeed, was most miserable. If the Viscount's mad explanations did not satisfy a single scruple of his mind, was it not possible they might have sufficed with others more conversant with such matters? Perhaps he is not worse than others of his own class. What would be his feelings if he were to involve George in a quarrel for such a cause? This was a consideration that pressed itself in twenty different forms, each of them enough to appal him. But the man is a defaulter: he has fled from England with "shame," was the stubborn conviction, which no efforts of his casuistry could banish; and the more he reflected on this, the less possible seemed anything like evasion or compromise.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE END OF THE FIRST ACT."

THE point discussed in our last chapter, if not a momentous one in itself, was destined to exercise a very important influence upon the fortunes of the Onslow family. The interview between Sir Stafford and the Viscount scarcely occupied five minutes; after which the Baronet wrote a note of some length to her Ladyship, to which she as promptly replied; a second, and even a third interchange of correspondence followed. The dinner party appointed for that day was put off; a certain ominous kind of silence pervaded the house. The few privileged visitors were denied admission. Mr. Proctor, Sir Stafford's man, wore a look of more than common seriousness. Mademoiselle Celestine's glances revealed a haughty sense of triumph. Even the humbler menials appeared to feel that something had occurred, and betrayed in their anxious faces some resemblance to that vague sense of half-curiosity, half-terror, the passengers of a steam-boat experience when an accident, of whose nature they know nothing, has occurred to the machinery.

Their doubts and suspicions assumed more shape when the order came that Sir Stafford would dine in the library, and her Ladyship in

r own room; George Onslow alone appearing in the dining-room. here was an air of melancholy over everything: the silence deepening night came on. Servants went noiselessly to and fro, drew the curins, and closed the doors with a half-stealthy gesture, and seemed as ough fearful of awakening some slumbering outbreak of passion.

We neither have, nor desire to have, secrets from our readers. We ill therefore proceed to Sir Stafford's dressing-room, where the old aronet sat moodily over the fire, his anxious features and sorrow-struck pression showing the ravages even a few hours of suffering had inicted. His table was littered with papers, parchments, and other foridable-looking documents. Some letters lay sealed here, others were lf-written there; everything about him showed the conflict of doubt d indecision that was going on within his mind; and truly a most inful struggle was maintained there.

For some time back he had seen with displeasure the course of extraagance and waste of all his household; he had observed the habits of ckless expense with which his establishment was maintained; but possing a very ample fortune, and feeling that probably some change would made with the coming summer, he had forborn to advert to it, and dured with what patience he could a mode of life whose very display was stasteful to him. Now, however, a more serious cause for anxiety prented itself, in the class of intimates admitted by Lady Hester to her ciety. Of the foreigners he knew comparatively little, but that little s not to their advantage. Some, were wealthy voluptuaries, glad to opagate their own habits of extravagance among those they suspected fortunes smaller than their own. Others, were penniless adventurers, culating upon everything that might turn to their profit. All, were n of pleasure, and of that indolent, lounging, purposeless character so culiarly unpleasing to those who have led active lives, and been always mersed in the cares and interests of business.

Such men, he rightly judged, were dangerous associates to his son, the ry worst acquaintances for Kate, in whom already he was deeply intested, but still no actual stain of dishonour—no palpable flaw could be tected in their fame, 'till the arrival of Lord Norwood added his name the list.

To receive a man of whose misconduct in England he had acquired ery proof, was a step beyond his endurance. Here or never must he ke his stand; and manfully he did so. At first, by calm argument d remonstrance, and at last by firm resolution and determination. ithout adverting to what had passed between the Viscount and himlf, the letter he addressed to Lady Hester conveyed his unalterle resolve not to know Lord Norwood. Lady Hester's reply was not

less peremptory, and scarcely as courteous. The correspondence continued with increasing warmth on both sides, 'till Sir Stafford palpably hinted at the possible consequences of a spirit of discordance and disagreement so ill-adapted to conjugal welfare. Her Ladyship caught up the suggestion with avidity, and professed that, whatever scruples his delicacy might feel, to hers there was none in writing the word, "Separation."

If the thought had already familiarised itself to his mind, the word had not; and strange it is, that the written syllables should have a power and a meaning that the idea itself could never realise.

To men who have had little publicity in their lives, and that little always of an honourable nature, there is no thought so poignantly miserable as the dread of a scandalous notoriety. To associate their names with anything that ministers to gossip—to make them tea-table talk—still worse, to expose them to sneering and impertinent criticisms, by revealing the secrets of their domesticity, is a torture to which no mere physical suffering has anything to compare. Sir Stafford Onslow was a true representative of this class of feeling. The sight of his name in the list of Directors of some great enterprise, as the Patron of a charity, the Governor of a hospital, or the Donor to an institution, was about as much of newspaper notoriety as he could bear without a sense of shrinking delicacy; but to become the mark for public discussion in the relations of his private life—to have himself and his family brought up to the bar of that terrible ordeal, where bad tongues are the eloquent, and evil speakers are the witty, was a speculation too terrible to think over; and this was exactly what Lady Hester was suggesting!

Is it not very strange that woman, with whose nature we inseparably and truly associate all those virtues that take their origin in refinement and modesty, should sometimes be able to brave a degree of publicity, to which, a man, the very hardiest and least shamefaced, would succumb, crestfallen and abashed; that her timid delicacy, her shrinking bashfulness, can be so hardened by the world, that she can face a notoriety where every look is an indictment, and every whisper a condemnation!

Now, if Lady Hester was yet remote from this, she had still journeyed one stage of the road. She had abundant examples around her of those best received and best looked on in society, whose chief claim to the world's esteem seemed to be the contempt with which they treated all its ordinances. There was a dash of heroism in their effrontery that pleased her; they appeared more gay, more buoyant, more elastic in spirits than other people; their increased liberty seemed to impart enlarged and more generous views, and they were always "good-natured," since, living in the very glassiest of houses, they never "shied" a pebble.

While, then, Sir Stafford sat overwhelmed with shame and sorrow at the bare thought of the public discussion that awaited him, Lady Hester was speculating upon condolences here, approbation there, panegyrics upon her high spirit, and congratulations upon her freedom. The little half-shadowy allusions her friends would throw out from time to time upon the strange unsuitableness of her marriage with a man so much her senior, would soon be converted into comments of unrestricted license. Besides—and perhaps the greatest charm of all was—she would then have a grievance—not the worn-out grievance of some imaginary ailment, that nobody believes in but the "Doctor"—not the mock agonies of a heart complaint, that saves the sufferer from eating bad dinners in vulgar company, but always allows them a respite for a *déjeûner* at the Court, or a supper after the Opera with a few chosen "convives"—but a real substantial grievance, over which men might be eloquent and ladies pathetic. Such were the different feelings with which two persons contemplated the same event. Sir Stafford's thoughts turned instantly towards England. What would be said there by all those friends who had endeavoured to dissuade him from this ill-suited union? Their sorrowful compassion was even less endurable than the malice of others; and Grounsell, too—what would his old friend think of a catastrophe so sudden? In his heart, Sir Stafford was glad that the Doctor was absent, much as he needed his counsel and advice; he still more dreaded the terror of his triumphant eye at the accomplishment of his oft-repeated prediction.

From George he met no support whatever. He either believed, or thought that he believed, Norwood's garbled explanation. Intercourse with a certain set of "fast men" had shown him that a man might do a "screwy" thing now and then, and yet not be cut by his acquaintance; and the young Guardsman deemed his father's rigid notions nothing but prejudices—very excellent and commendable ones, no doubt, but as inapplicable to our present civilisation as would be a coat of mail, or a back-piece of chain-armour. George Onslow, therefore, halted between the two opinions. Adhering to his father's side from feelings of affection and respect, he was drawn to Lady Hester's by his convictions; not, indeed, aware how formidable the difference had already become between them, and that, before that very night closed in, they had mutually agreed upon a separation, which, while occupying the same house, was essentially to exclude all intercourse.

One consideration gave Sir Stafford much painful thought. What was to become of Kate Dalton in this new turn of affairs? The position of a young girl on a visit with a family living in apparent unity and happiness was very wide apart from her situation as the companion

of a woman separated, even thus much, from her husband. It would be equally unfair to her own family, as unjust to the girl herself, to detain her then, in such a conjuncture. And, yet, what was to be done! Apart from all the unpleasantness of proposing an abrupt return to her home, came the thought of the avowal that must accompany the suggestion—the very confession he so dreaded to make. Of course, the gossipping of servants would soon circulate the rumour. But then they might not spread it beyond the Alps, nor make it the current talk of a German watering-place. Thus were his selfish feelings at war with higher and purer thoughts. But the struggle was not a long one. He sat down, and wrote to Lady Hester. Naturally assuming that all the reasons which had such force for himself would weigh equally with her, he dwelt less upon the arguments for Kate's departure than upon the mode in which it might be proposed and carried out. He adverted with feeling to the sacrifice the loss would inflict upon Lady Hester, but professed his conviction in the belief that all merely selfish considerations would give way before higher and more important duties.

"As it is," said he, "I fear much that we have done anything but conduce to this dear girl's welfare and happiness. We have shown her glimpses of a life whose emptiness she cannot appreciate, but by whose glitter she is already attracted. We have exposed her to all the seductions of flattery, pampering a vanity which is perhaps her one only failing. We have doubtless suggested to her imagination dreams of a future never to be realised, and we must now consign her to a home where all the affections of fond relatives will be unequal to the task of blinding her to its poverty and its obscurity. And yet even this is better than to detain her here.

"It shall be my care to see in what way I can—I was about to write recompense, nor would the word be unsuitable—recompense Mr. Dalton for the injury we have done him as regards his child; and if you have any suggestion to make me on this head, I will gladly accept it."

The note concluded with some hints as to the manner of making the communication to Kate, the whole awkwardness of which Sir Stafford, if need were, would take upon himself.

The whole temper of the letter was feeling and tender. Without even in the most remote way adverting to what had occurred between Lady Hester and himself, he spoke of their separation simply in its relation to Kate Dalton, for whom they were both bound to think and act with caution. As if concentrating every thought upon *her*, he did not suffer any other consideration to interfere. Kate, and Kate only, was at its theme.

Lady Hester, however, read the lines in a very different spirit. Sir

had just recovered from a mesmeric trance, into which, to calm her nervous exaltation, her physician, Dr. Buccellini, had thrown her. She had been lying in a state of half-hysterical apathy for some hours, all volition—almost all vitality—suspended, under the influence of an exaggerated credulity, when the letter was laid upon the table.

"What is that your maid has just left out of her hand?" asked the Doctor, in a tone of semi-imperiousness.

"A letter—a sealed letter," replied she, mystically waving her hand before her half-closed eyes.

The Doctor gave a look of triumph at the by-standers, and went on.

"Has the letter come from a distant country, or from a correspondent near at hand?"

"Near!" said she, with a shudder.

"Where is the writer at this moment?" asked he.

"In the house," said she, with another and more violent shuddering.

"I now take the letter in my hand," said the Doctor, "and what am I looking at?"

"A seal with two griffins supporting a spur."

The Doctor showed the letter on every side, with a proud and commanding gesture.

"There is a name written in the corner of the letter, beneath the address. Do you know that name?"

"A heavy thick sob was all the reply.

"There—there—be calm, be still," said he, majestically motioning with both hands towards her; and she immediately became composed and tranquil.

"Are the contents of this letter such as will give you pleasure?"

A shake of the head was the answer.

"Are they painful?"

"Very painful," said she, pressing her hand to her temples.

"Will these tidings be productive of grand consequences?"

"Yes, yes!" cried she, eagerly.

"What will you do, when you read them?"

"Act!" ejaculated she, solemnly.

"In compliance with the spirit, or in rejection?"

"Rejection!"

"Sleep on—sleep on," said the Doctor, with a wave of his hand; and, as he spoke, her head drooped, her arm fell listlessly down, and her long and heavy breathing denoted deep slumber. "There are people, Miss Dalton," said he to Kate, "who affect to see nothing in mesmerism but deception and trick, whose philosophy teaches them to discredit all that they cannot comprehend. I trust you may never be of this number."

"It is very wonderful, very strange," said she, thoughtfully.

"Like all the secrets of nature, its phenomena are above belief; yet, to those who study them with patience and industry, how compatible do they seem with the whole order and spirit of creation. The great system of vitality being a grand scheme of actionary and reactionary influences, the centrifugal being in reality the centripetal, and those impulses we vainly fancy to be our own instincts, being the impressions of external forces. Do you comprehend me?"

"Not perfectly; in part, perhaps," said she, diffidently.

"Even that is something," replied he, with a bland smile. "One whose future fortunes will place her in a station to exert influence, is an enviable convert to have brought to truth."

"I!" said she, blushing with shame and surprise together; "surely, you mistake, Sir; I am neither born to rank, nor like to attain it."

"Both one and the other, young lady," said he, solemnly; "high as your position will one day be, it will not be above the claims of your descent. It is not on fallible evidence that I read the future."

"And can you really predict my fortune in life?" asked she, eagerly.

"More certainly than you would credit it, when told!" said he, deliberately.

"How I should like to hear it,—how I should like to know——" She stopped, and a deep blush covered her face.

"And why should you not know that your dreams will be realised," said he, hastily, as if speaking from some irresistible impulse. "What more natural than to desire a glance, fleeting though it be, into that black vista, where the bright lightning of prophecy throws its momentary splendour."

"And how know you that I have had dreams?" said she, innocently.

"I know of them but by their accomplishment. I see you not in the present or the past, but in the future. There your image is revealed to me, and surrounded by a splendour I cannot describe. It is gorgeous, and barbaric in magnificence; there is something feudal in the state by which you are encompassed that almost speaks of another age."

"This is mere dream land, indeed," said she, laughing.

"Nay, not so; nor is it all bright and glorious, as you think. There are shadows of many a dark tint moving along the sunlit surface."

"But how know you all this?" asked she, half-incredulously.

"As you slept last evening in a mesmeric slumber on that sofa; but I will hear no further questioning. Look to our patient here, and if that letter agitate her overmuch, let me be sent for." And, with these words delivered oracularly, the Doctor left the room; while Kate seated herself beside the sofa where Lady Hester slept.

It was late in the night when Lady Hester awoke, and soon remembering that a letter had arrived, broke the seal and read it. If the proposal of Sir Stafford was in every way unacceptable, there was something which compensated for all, in the excitement of spirits an act of opposition was sure to produce; nor was it without a sense of triumph that she read lines penned in evident sorrow and depression of spirit. In fact, she made the not uncommon error of mistaking sorrow for repentance, and thought she perceived in her husband's tone a desire to retrace his steps. It is difficult to say whether such an *amende* would have given her pleasure; certainly she would not have accepted it without subjecting him to a term of probation of more or less length. In any case, as regarded Kate, she was decided at once upon a positive refusal; and as, with *her*, a resolve and a mode of action were usually the work of the same moment, she motioned to Kate to sit down beside her on the sofa; and passing her arm around her, drew her fondly towards her."

"Kate, dearest," said she, "I'm sure nothing would induce you to leave me—I mean, to desert and forsake me!"

Kate pressed the hand she held in her own to her lips with fervour, but could not speak for emotion.

"I say this," said Lady Hester, rapidly, "because the moment has come to test your fidelity. Sir Stafford and I—it is needless to state how and by what means—have at last discovered, what I fancy the whole world has seen for many a day, that we were totally unsuited to each other—in taste, age, habit, feeling, mode of life, and thought; that we have nothing in common—neither liking nor detesting the same things, but actually at variance upon every possible subject and person. Of course, all attempt to cover such discrepancies must be a failure. We might trump up a hollow truce, child, but it never could be an alliance; and so we have thought—I'm sure it is well that we have hit upon even one topic for agreement—we have thought that the best, indeed the only thing we could do, was—to separate!"

An exclamation, almost like an accent of pain, escaped Kate at these words.

"Yes, dearest," resumed Lady Hester; "it was his own proposal, made in the very coldest imaginable fashion; for men have constantly this habit, and always take the tone of dignity when they are about to do an injustice. All this, however, I was prepared for, and could suffer without complaint; but he desires to rob me of you, my dear child—to deprive me of the only friend, the only confidant I have in the world. I don't wonder that you grow pale and look shocked at such cruelty, concealed as it is under the mask of care for your interests, and regard

who has confided all her sorrows to my heart, and reposes all her trust in my fidelity. This would break Lady Hester's heart and my own together; and yet nothing is more likely than such a course." Better a thousand times not expose her friend's cause to such a casualty. A little time and a little patience may place matters in a position more intelligible and less objectionable: and, after all, the question is purely a family secret, the divulgence of which, even to a sister, is perhaps not warrantable.

Such were among the plausibilities with which she glanced over her conduct: without, however, satisfying herself that she was in the right. She had only begun the descent of lax morality, and her head was addled by the new sensation. Happy are they who, even from weak nerves, relinquish the career!

Kate's letter home, then, was full of gay revelations. Galleries, churches, gardens; objects of art or historic interest; new pictures of manners; sketches of society, abounded. There were descriptions of *fêtes*, too, and brilliant assemblies, with great names of guests and gorgeous displays of splendour. Well and sweetly were they written; a quick observation and a keen insight into character in every line. The subtle analysis of people and their pretensions, which comes of mixture with the world, was pre-eminent in all she said: while a certain sharp wit pointed many of the remarks, and sparkled in many a brilliant passage.

It was altogether a lively and a pleasant letter. A stranger, reading it, would have pronounced the writer clever and witty; a friend, would have regretted the want of personal details, the hundred little traits of egoism, that speak confidence and trust. But to a sister! and such a sister as Nelly! it was, indeed, barren! No outpouring of warm affection; no fond memory of home; no reference to that little fireside, whence her own image had never departed, and where her presence was each night invoked.

Oh! Kate, has Hanserl's dark prophecy thrown its shadow already to your feet? Can a young heart be so easily corrupted, and so soon?

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SMALL DINNER AT THE VILLINO ZOE.

g the penalties great folk pay for their ascendancy, there is one arkable, and that is, the intense interest taken in all their affairs eds of worthy people who are *not* of their acquaintance. This which transcends every other known description of sympathy, in small communities. In the capital of which we are now it was at its very highest pitch of development. The Onslows all the table-talk of the city; but in no circle were their frequently and ably discussed as in that little parliament of ich held its meetings at the "Villino Zoe."

Ricketts, who was no common diplomatist, had done her utmost ish relations of amity with her great neighbour. She had all the arts of courtesy, and all the devices of politeness, to "entente cordiale;" but all in vain. Her advances had been coldness, and "something more;" her perfumed little notes, a style of euphuism all her own, had been left unanswered; nts of fruit and flowers unacknowledged—it is but fair to add, never proceeded further than the porter's lodge—even her ards were only replied to by the stiff courtesy of cards, left by ster's "Chasseur;" so that, in fact, failure had fallen on all her rs, and she had not even attained to the barren honour of a on as they passed in the promenade.

ras a very serious discomfiture, and might, when it got abroad, ly damaged the Ricketts' ascendancy in that large circle, who ustomed to regard her as the glass of fashion. Heaven knew ount of insubordination might spring out of it! what rebellious night gain currency and credit! It was but the winter before Duchess, who passed through, on her way to Rome, asked, "Who ketts was?" and the shock was felt during the whole season The Vandyk, for whose authenticity Martha swore, was actually question. The "Sevres" cup she had herself painted, was the of a heresy as astounding. We live in an age of movement vulsion—no man's landmarks are safe now, and Mrs. Ricketts is.

Onslows, it was clear, would not know *her;* it only remained, show why she would not know *them.* It was a rare thing to

find a family settling down at Florence, against whom a "True Bill" might not easily be found of previous misconduct. Few left England without a reason, that might readily become an allegation. Bankruptcy or divorce were the light offences; the higher ones, we must not speak of. Now the Onslows, as it happened, were not in this category. Sir Stafford's character was unimpeachable—her Ladyship's had nothing more grave against it than the ordinary levities of her station. George "had gone the pace," it was true, but nothing disreputable attached to him. There was no use, therefore, in "trying back" for a charge, and Mrs. Ricketts perceived that they must be arraigned on the very vaguest of evidence. Many a head has fallen beneath the guillotine for a suspicion, and many a heart been broken on a surmise!

A little dinner at the Villino opened the plan of proceedings. It was a small "auto-da-fé" of character, at which the Onslows were to be the victims, while the grand inquisitors were worthily represented by the Polish Count, Haggerstone, Purvis, and a certain Mr. Foglass, then passing through Florence on his way to England. This gentleman, who was the reputed son of a supposed son of George the Fourth, was received as "very good royalty" in certain circles abroad, and, by virtue of a wig, a portly chest, and a most imposing pomposity of manner, taken to be exceedingly like his grandfather—just on the same principle as red currant jelly makes middling mutton resemble venison.

To get rid of his importunity, a Minister had made him Consul in some remote village of the East, but finding that there were neither fees nor perquisites, Foglass had left his post to besiege the doors of Downing-street once more, and if rejected as a suppliant, to become an admirable grievance for a Radical Member, and a "very cruel case of oppression" for the morning papers.

Foglass was essentially a "humbug;" but, unlike most, if not all other humbugs, without the smallest ingredient of any kind of ability. When men are said to live by their wits, their capital is, generally speaking, a very sufficient one; and that interesting class of persons known as adventurers, numbers many clever talkers, shrewd observers, subtle tactitians, and admirable billiard players; with a steady hand on a pistol, but ready to "pocket" either an "insult" or a "ball," if the occasion require it. None of these gifts pertained to Foglass. He had not one of the qualities which either succeed in the world or in society, and yet, strange to say, this intolerable bore had a kind of popularity; that is to say, people gave him a vacant place at their dinners, and remembered him at pic-nics.

His whole strength lay in his wig, and a certain slow, measured intonation, which he found often attracted attention to what he said, and

gave his tiresome anecdotes of John Kemble, Munden, and Mathews, the semblance of a point they never possessed. Latterly, however, he had grown deaf, and, like most who suffer under that infirmity, taken to speaking in a whisper so low as to be inaudible—a piece of politeness for which even our reader will be grateful, as it will spare him the misery of his twaddle.

Haggerstone and he were intimates—were it not a profanation of the word, we should say, friends. They were, however, always together; and Haggerstone took pains to speak of his companion as a "monstrous clever fellow, who required to be known to be appreciated." Jekyl probably discovered the true secret of the alliance, in the fact that they always talked to each other about the nobility, and never gave them their titles; an illusory familiarity with Dukes and Earls that appeared to render them supremely happy. Richmond, Beaufort, Cleveland, and Stanley, were in their mouths as "Household words."

After all, it was a harmless sort of pastime; and if these "Imaginary Conversations" gave them pleasure, why need we grumble?

We have scruples about asking our reader even to a description of the Ricketts' dinner. It was a true Barmecide feast. There was a very showy bouquet of flowers; there was a lavish display of what seemed silver; there was a good deal of queer china and impracticable glass; in short, much to look at, and very little to eat. Of this fact the Pole's appreciation was like an instinct, and as the *entrées* were handed round, all who came after him became soon aware of. Neither the wine nor the dessert were temptations to a long sitting, and the party soon found themselves in the drawing-room.

"Son Excellence is going to England?" said the Pole, addressing Foglass, who had been announced as an Ambassador; "if you do see de Count Ojeffskoy, tell him I am living here, as well as a poor exile can, who have lost palaces, and horses, and diamonds, and all de rest."

"Ah! the poor dear Count!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts; while Martha prolonged the echo.

"You carry on the war tolerably well, notwithstanding," said Haggerstone, who knew something of the other's resources in *piquet* and *écarté*.

"Carry on de war!" rejoined he, indignantly, "wid my fader, who work in de mines! and my beautiful sisters, who walk naked about de streets of Crakow!"

"What kind of climate have they in Crak—Crak—Crak——" A fit of coughing finished a question which nobody thought of answering; and Purvis sat down, abashed, in a corner.

"Arthur, my love," said Mrs. Ricketts—she was great at a diversion,

whenever such a tactic was wanted—"do you hear what Colonel Haggerstone has been saying?"

"No, dearest," muttered the old General, as he worked away with rule and compass.

"He tells me," said the lady, still louder, "that the Onslows have separated. Not an open, formal separation, but that they occupy distinct apartments, and hold no intercourse whatever."

"Sir Stafford lives on the *rez de chaussée*," said Haggerstone, who, having already told the story seven times the same morning, was quite perfect in the recital—"Sir Stafford lives on the *rez de chaussée*, with a small door into the garden. My Lady retains the entire first floor and the grand conservatory. George has a small *garçon* apartment off the terrace."

"How very distressing!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, whose woe-worn looks seemed to imply that she had never heard of a similar incident before; "and how unlike us, Arthur," added she, with a smile of beaming affection. "He has ever been what you see him, since the day he stole my young, unsuspecting heart."

The Colonel looked over at the object thus designated, and, by the grin of malice on his features, appeared to infer that the compliment was but a sorry one, after all.

"'John Anderson my Jo, John,'" muttered he, half aloud.

"'We've climbed the hill toge—ge—ge—ther,'" chimed in Purvis, with a cackle.

"Gather what, Sir?—Blackberries, was it?" cried Haggerstone.

"Don't quote that low-lived creature," said Mrs. Ricketts, "a poet only conversant with peasants and their habits. Let us talk of our own order. What of these poor Onslows?"

"Sir Stafford dines at two, Madam. A cutlet, a vegetable, and a cherry tart; two glasses of Gordon's sherry, and a cup of coffee."

"Without milk. I had it from Proctor," broke in Purvis, who was bursting with jealousy at the accuracy of the other's narrative.

"You mean without sugar, Sir," snapped Haggerstone. "Nobody does take milk-coffee after dinner."

"I always do," rejoined Purvis, "when I can't get mara—mara—mara——"

"I hope you can get maraschino down easier than you pronounce it, Sir."

"Be quiet Scroope," said his sister; "you always interrupt."

"He do make de devil of misverstandness wit his what-ye-call-'um," added the Pole, contemptuously.

And poor Purvis, rebuked on every side, was obliged to fall back beside Martha and her embroidery.

"My Lady," resumed Haggerstone, "is served at eleven o'clock. The moment Granzini's solo is over in the Ballet, an express is sent off to order dinner. The table is far more costly than Midchikoff's."

"I do believe well," said the Count, who always, for nationality sake, deemed it proper to abuse the Russian. "De Midchikoff cook tell me, he have but ten paoli—how you say—par tête—by the tête—for his dinner; dat, to include everyting, from the caviar to the sheeze."

"That was not the style at the Pavilion formerly," roared out Haggerstone, repeating the remark in Foglass's ear.

And the ex-Consul smiled blandly towards Mrs. Ricketts, and said, "He'd take anything to England for her with pleasure."

"He's worse than ever," remarked Haggerstone, irritably. "When people have a natural infirmity, they ought to confine themselves to their own room."

"Particularly when it is one of the tem—tem—temper," said Purvis, almost choked with passion.

"Better a hasty temper than an impracticable tongue, Sir," said Haggerstone.

"Be quiet, Scroope," added Mrs. Ricketts; and he was still. Then, turning to the Colonel, she went on: "How thankful we ought to be that we never knew these people. They brought letters to us—some, indeed, from dear and valued friends. That sweet Diana Comerton, who married the Duke of Ellswater, wrote a most pressing entreaty that I should call upon them."

"She didn't marry the Duke; she married his Chap—Chaplain," chimed in Purvis.

"Will you be quiet, Scroope?" remarked the Lady.

"I ought to know," rejoined he, grown courageous in the goodness of his cause. "He was Bob Nutty. Bitter Bob, we always called him at school. He had a kind of a poly—poly—poly——"

"A polyanthus," suggested Haggerstone.

"No. It was a poly—polypus—a polypus, that made him snuffle in his speech."

"Ach Gott!" sighed the Pole; but whether in sorrow for poor "Bob," or in utter weariness at his historian, was hard to say.

"Lady Foxington, too," said Mrs. Ricketts, "made a serious request that we should be intimate with her friend Lady Hester. She was candid enough to say that her Ladyship would not suit *me*. 'She has no soul, Zoe,' wrote she, 'so I needn't say more.'"

"Dat is ver bad," said the Pole, gravely.

"Still I should have made her acquaintance, for the sake of that young creature, Miss Dalton, I think they call her, and whom I rather suspect to be a distant cousin of ours."

"Yes; there were Dawkinses at Exeter—a very respectable collection, one was, Joe Dawkins," came in Purvis; "he used to say we were ot—co—co—connexions."

"This family, Sir, is called Dalton, and not even a stutter can make that Dawkins."

"Couldn't your friend, Mr. Foglass, find out something about these Daltons for us, as he goes through Germany?" asked Mrs. Ricketts of the Colonel.

"No one could execute such a commission better, Madam, only you must give him his instructions in writing. Foglass," added he, at the top of his voice, "let me have your note-book for a moment."

"With pleasure," said he, presenting his snuff-box.

"No; your memorandum-book!" screamed the other, louder.

"It's gone down," whispered the deaf man. "I lost the key on Tuesday last."

"Not your watch, man. I want to write a line in your note-book;" and he made a pantomimic of writing.

"Yes, certainly; if Mrs. R. will permit, I'll write to her with pleasure."

"Confound him," muttered Haggerstone; and, taking up a visiting card, he wrote on the back of it, "Could you trace the Daltons, as you go back by Baden?"

The deaf man at once brightened up; a look of shrewd intelligence lighted up his fishy eyes as he said—

"Yes, of course; say what do you want?"

"Antecedents—family—fortune," wrote Haggerstone.

"If dey have de tin," chimed in the Pole.

"If they be moral and of irreproachable reputation," said Mrs. Ricketts.

"Are they related to the other Dawkinses?" asked Purvis. "Let him ask if their mother was not godfather to—no, I mean grandfather—to the Reverend Jere—Jere—Jere——"

"Be quiet, Scroope! will you be quiet?"

"There, you have it all, now," said Haggerstone, as he finished writing. "Their 'family, fortune, flaws, and frailties'—'what they did, and where they did it'—observing accuracy as to Christian names, and as many dates as possible."

"I'll do it," said Foglass, as he read over the "instruction."

"We want it soon, too," said Mrs. Ricketts. "Tell him we shall need the information at once."

"This with speed," wrote Haggerstone at the foot of the memorandum.

Foglass bowed a deep assent.

"How like his grandfather," said Mrs. Ricketts, in ecstasy.

"I never knew he had one," whispered Haggerstone to the Pole. "His father was a coachmaker in Long Acre."

"Is he not thought very like them?" asked Mrs. Ricketts, with a side-long glance of admiration at the auburn peruke.

"I've heard that the wig is authentic, Madam."

"He has so much of that regal urbanity in his manner."

"If he is not the first gentleman of England," muttered Haggerstone to himself, "he is the first one in his own family at least."

"By-the-way," said Mrs. Ricketts, hastily, "let him inquire into that affair of Lord Norwood."

"No necessity, Madam; the affair is in *Bell's Life*, with the significant question, 'Where is he?' But he can learn the particulars at all events." And he made a note in the book.

"How dreadful all this, and how sad to think Florence should be the resort of such people."

"If it were not for raparees and refugees, Madam, house-rent would be very inexpensive," said the Colonel, in a subdued voice; while, turning to the Pole, he added, "and if respectability is to be always a caricature, I'd as soon have its opposite. I suppose you do not admit the Viscount, Madam?"

"He has not ventured to present himself," said Mrs. Ricketts, proudly. "I hope that there is at least one sanctuary where virtue can live unmolested." And, as she spoke, she looked over at Martha, who was working away patiently, but whether happy in the exclusive Tariff, aforesaid, or somewhat tired of "Protection," we are unable to say.

"What has he do?" asked the Count.

"He has done the 'Ring' all round, I believe," said Haggerstone, chuckling at a joke which he alone could appreciate.

"Dey do talk of play in England!" said the Pole, contemptuously; "dey never do play high, with dere leetle—how you call 'em—bets, of tree, four guinea! at *écarté*. But in Polen we have two, tree, five tousand crowns on each card. Dere, crack! you lose a fortune, or I do win one! One evening at Garowidsky's I do lose one estate of seventeen million florins, but I no care noting for all that! I was ver rich, wit my palaces and de mayorat—how you call dat?"

Before this question could be answered, the servant threw open the

double door of the *salon* and announced, "Milordo Norwood!" A shell might have burst in the apartment and not created much more confusion. Mrs. Ricketts gave a look at Martha, as though to assure herself that she was in safety. Poor Martha's own fingers trembled as she bent over her frame; Haggerstone buttoned up his coat, and arranged his cravat with the air of a man so consummate a tactitian, that he could actually roll himself in pitch and yet never catch the odour; while Purvis, whose dread of a duellist exceeded his fear of a mad dog, ensconced himself behind a stand of geraniums, where he resolved to live in a state of retirement until the terrible Viscount had withdrawn. As for the Count, a preparatory touch at his moustache, and a slight arrangement of his hair, sufficed him to meet anything; and as these were the ordinary details of his daily toilet, he performed them with a rapidity quite instinctive.

To present oneself in a room where our appearance is unacceptable, is, perhaps, no slight test of tact, manner, and effrontery; to be actually indifferent to the feelings around, is to be insensible to the danger; to see the peril and yet appear not to notice it, constitutes the true line of action. Lord Norwood was perfect in this piece of performance, and there was neither exaggerated cordiality nor any semblance of constraint in his manner as he advanced to Mrs. Ricketts, and, taking her hand, pressed it respectfully to his lips.

"This salutation," said he, gaily, "is a commission from Lord Kennycroft, your old and constant admirer. It was his last word as we parted, 'Kiss Mrs. Ricketts' hand for me, and say, I am faithful as ever.'"

"Poor dear Lord! General, here is Lord Norwood come to see us."

"How good of him—how very kind. Just arrived from the East, my Lord?" said he, shaking Foglass by the hand, in mistake.

"No, Sir; from Malta." He wouldn't say England, for reasons. "Miss Ricketts, I am most happy to see you;—and still occupied with the fine arts? Haggy, how d'ye do? Really it seems to me like yesterday since I sat here last in this delightful armchair, and looked about me, on all these dear familiar objects. You've varnished the Correggio, I think?"

"The Vandyk, my Lord."

"To be sure—the Vandyk. How stupid I am. Indeed, Lady Foxington said, that not all your culture would ever make anything of me."

"How is Charlotte?" asked Mrs. Ricketts; this being the familiar for Lady F.

"Just as you saw her last. Thinner, perhaps, but looking admirably."

"And the dear Duke—how is he?"

"Gouty—always gouty—but able to be about."

"I am so glad to hear it. It is so refreshing to talk of old friends."

"They are always talking of you. I'm sure, 'Zoe'—forgive me the liberty—Zoe Ricketts is an authority on every subject of taste and literature."

"How did you come here, my Lord?" whispered Haggerstone.

"The new opera broke down, and there is no house open before twelve," was the hasty reply.

"Is Jemima married, my Lord?"

"No. There's something or other wrong about the settlements. Who's the foreigner, Haggy?"

"A Pole. Petrolaffsky."

"No, no—not a bit of it. *I* know him," said the other, rapidly; then, turning to Mrs. Ricketts, he grew warmly interested in the private life and adventures of the nobility, for all of whom she entertained a most catholic affection.

It was, indeed, a grand field-day for the Peerage; even to the "Pensioners" all were under arms. It was a review such as she rarely enjoyed, and certainly she "improved the occasion." She scattered about her noble personages with the profusion of a child strewing wild flowers. There were Dukes she had known from their cradles; Marchionesses with whom she had disported in childhood; Earls and Viscounts who had been her earliest playmates; not to speak of a more advanced stage in her history, when all these distinguished individuals were suppliants and suitors. To listen to her, you would swear that she had never played shuttlecock with anything under an Earl, nor trundled a hoop with aught below a Lord in Waiting! Norwood fooled her to the top of her bent. To use his own phrase, "He left her easy hazards, and everything on the balls." It is needless to say that, in such pleasant converse, she had no memory for the noble Viscount's own transgressions. He might have robbed the Exchequer, or stolen the Crown jewels, for anything that she could recollect! and when, by a seeming accident, he did allude to Newmarket, and lament his most "unlucky book," she smiled complacently, as though to say, that he could afford himself even the luxury of being ruined, and not care for it.

"Florence is pretty much as it used to be, I suppose," said he; "and one really needs one's friends to rebut and refute foolish rumours, when they get abroad. Now, you'll oblige me by contradicting, if you ever hear this absurd story. I neither did win forty thousand from the Duke of Stratton, nor shoot him in a duel, for non-payment."—Both these derelictions were invented on the moment.—"You'll hear fifty other similar offences laid to my charge; and I trust to you and the Onslows

for the refutation. In fact, it is the duty of one's own class to defend 'their order.'"

Mrs. Ricketts smiled blandly, and bowed—bowed as though her gauze turban had been a coronet, and the tinsel finery, jewelled strawberry leaves! To be coupled with the Onslows in the defence of a Viscount was a proud thought. What if it might be made a grand reality?

"*Apropos* of the Onslows, my Lord," said she, insidiously, "you are very intimate with them. How is it that we have seen so little of each other? Are we not congenial spirits?"

"Good Heavens! I thought you were like sisters. There never were people so made for each other. All your tastes, habits, associations—forgive me, if I say your very antipathies—are alike; for you both are unforgiving enemies of vulgarity. Depend upon it, there has been some underhand influence at work. Rely on't, that evil tongues have kept you apart." This he said in a whisper, and with a sidelong glance towards where Haggerstone sat at *écarté* with the Pole.

"Do you really think so?" asked she, reddening with anger, as she followed the direction of his eyes.

"I can hit upon no other solution of the mystery," said he, thoughtfully; "but know it I will, and must. You know, of course, that they can't endure him."

"No, I never heard that!"

"It is not mere dislike, it is actual detestation. I have striven to moderate the feeling. I have said, 'True enough the man is bad "ton," but you needn't admit him to anything like intimacy. Let him come and go with the herd you receive at your large parties, and, above all, never repeat anything after him, for he has always the vulgar version of every incident in high life.'"

Mrs. Ricketts raised her arched eyebrows and looked astonished, but it was a feeling in which acquiescence was beautifully blended, and the Viscount marked it well.

"You must tell me something of this Miss Dalton," said he, drawing his chair closer; "they affect a kind of mystery about her. Who is she? What is she?"

"There are various versions of her story, abroad," said Mrs. Ricketts, who now spoke like the Chief Justice delivering a charge. "Some say that she is a natural daughter of Sir Stafford's; some aver that she is the last of a distinguished family, whose fortune was embezzled by the Onslows; others assert that she is a half-sister of Lady Hester's own; but who ought to know the truth better than you, my Lord?"

"I know absolutely nothing. She joined them in Germany, but where, when, and how, I never heard."

"I'll soon be able to inform you, my Lord, on every detail of the matter," said she, proudly. "Our kind friend yonder, Mr. Foglass, has undertaken to discover everything. Mr. F.—will you touch his arm for me, Martha? and, the gentleman being aroused to consciousness, now arose, and approached Mrs. Ricketts' chair—"may I be permitted to take a glance at your note-book?" This speech was accompanied by a pantomimic gesture which he quickly understood. "I wish to show you, my Lord," said she, addressing the Viscount, "that we proceed most methodically in our searches after title, as I sometimes call it—ha! ha! ha! Now, here is the precious little volume, and this will explain the degree of accuracy such an investigation demands. This comes of living abroad, my Lord," added she, with a smile. "One never can be too cautious—never too guarded in their intimacies! The number of dubious people one meets with—the equivocal characters that somehow obtain a footing in society—— Here, I really must ask you to decipher these ingenious hieroglyphics yourself." And she handed the book to his Lordship.

He took it courteously at the spot she opened it, and, as his eyes fell upon the page, a slight—very slight—flush rose to his cheek, while he continued to read the lines before him more than once over. "Very explicit, certainly!" said he, while a smile of strange meaning curled his lip; and then, closing the book, he returned it to the lady's hand; not, however, before he had adroitly torn out the page he had been looking at, and which contained the following words:—"Norwood's affair—the precise story of the N. M. business—if cut in England, and scratched at the 'Whip.'" "I cannot sufficiently commend either your caution or your tact, Mrs. Ricketts," said he, bowing urbanely; "without a little scrutiny of this kind, our *salons* would be overrun with blacklegs and bad characters!"

It was now late—late enough for Lady Hester—and the Viscount rose to take his leave. He was perfectly satisfied with the results of his visit. He had secretly enjoyed all the absurdities of his hostess, and even stored up some of her charming flights for repetition elsewhere; he had damaged Haggerstone, whose evil-speaking he dreaded, and, by impugning his good breeding, had despoiled him of all credit; he had seen the Polish Count in a society which, even such as it was, was many degrees above his pretensions, and, although they met without recognition, a masonic glance of intelligence had passed between them; and, lastly, he had made an ally of the dear Zoe herself, ready to swear to his good character, and vouch for the spotless honour of all his dealings on turf or card-table.

"Has he explained the Newmarket affair, Madam?" said Haggerstone, as the door closed on the Viscount's departure.

"Perfectly, Colonel; there is not the shadow of a suspicion against him."

"And so he was not scr—scr—scratched at the 'Whip?'" cried Purvis, emerging from his leafy retreat.

"Nothing of the kind, Scroope."

"A scratch, but not a wound, perhaps," said Haggerstone, with a grin of malice.

"I am ver happy—please ver moosh," said the Count, "for de sake of de order. I am republiquecain, but never forget I'm de noble blood!"

"Beautiful sentiment," exclaimed Mrs. Ricketts, enthusiastically. "Martha, did you hear what the Count said? General, I hope you didn't lose it?"

"I was alway for de cause of de people," said the Count, throwing back his hair wildly, and seeming as if ready to do battle at a moment's warning.

"For an anti-monarchist, he turns up the king wonderfully often at *écarté*," said Haggerstone, in a low muttering, only overheard by Martha.

"I don't think the demo—demo—demo——" But before Purvis had finished his poly-syllabic word, the company had time to make their farewell speeches and depart; indeed, as the servant came to extinguish the lamps, he found the patient Purvis very red in the face, and with other signs of excitement, deeply seated in a chair, and as if struggling against an access of suffocation.

What the profound sentiment which he desired to enunciate might therefore be, is lost to history, and this true narrative is unable to record.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VISCOUNT'S VISION.

When Lord Norwood arrived at the Mazzarini Palace, he was surprised not to find the usual half-dozen carriages of the *habitués* drawn up in the court-yard, and still more so to learn that her Ladyship did not receive that evening. He ascended to George Onslow's apartment, and discovered that he had dined with Prince Midchikoff, and not yet returned. Not knowing how to spend the hours, so much earlier than

those of his usually retiring to rest, he lighted a cigar, and threw himself on a sofa before the fire.

The reveries of men who live much in the world are seldom very agreeable; the work of self-examination comes with a double penalty when it is rarely exercised, and the heavy arrears of time are formidable scores to confront. Lord Norwood was no exception to this theory. Not that he was one to waste time or temper in self-reproaches. The bygone was essentially with him the "irrevocable." It might, it is true, occasionally suggest a hint for the future, but it never originated a sorrow for the past. His philosophy was a very brief code, and comprised itself in this—"That he didn't think well of himself, but thought worse of all others." All that he had seen of life was duplicity, falsehood, selfishness, and treachery. In different stations these characteristics took different forms; and what was artfully cloaked in courtesy by the Lord, was displayed in all its naked deformity by the Plebeian.

He might have conducted himself respectably enough had he been rich—at least, he fervently believed so—but he was poor, and therefore driven to stratagems to maintain his position in society. Cheated by his guardians and neglected by his tutor, he was sent into the world half-ruined and wholly ignorant, to become at first a victim, and afterwards the victimiser. With no spirit of retributive vengeance—there was nothing of reprisal in his line of conduct—he simply thought that such was the natural and inevitable course of events, and that every man begins as dupe and ends as knave. The highest flight of the human mind, in his esteem, was successful hypocrisy; and although without the plastic wit or the actual knowledge of life which are required well to sustain a part, he had contrived to impose upon a very large number of persons, who looked up to his rank; for, strange enough, many who would not have been duped by a Commoner, fell easy victims to the arts of "my Lord."

The value of his title he understood perfectly. He knew everything it could, and everything it could not, do for him. He was aware that the aristocracy of England will stand by one of their order through many vicissitudes; and that he who is born to a coronet has a charmed life, in circumstances where one less noble must perish ingloriously. He knew, too, how, for very shame sake, they would screen one of themselves, and by a hundred devices seem to contradict before the world, what they lament over behind its back: and, lastly, he knew well that he had always a title and a lineage to bestow; and that the Peerage was the great prize among the daughters of men.

Now, latterly, he had been pushing prerogative somewhat too far: he had won large sums from young men not out of their teens; he had

been associated in play transactions with names less than reputable; and, finally, having backed a stable to an immense amount at Newmarket, had levanted on the day of his losing. He had done the act deliberately and calmly. It was a *coup* which, if successful, replaced him in credit and affluence; if a failure, it only confirmed the wavering judgment of his set, and left him to shift for the future in a different sphere; for, while a disgraced Viscount is very bad company for Viscounts, he is often a very welcome guest amongst that amiably innocent class who think the privileges of the aristocracy include bad morals with blue ribbons.

The turf could now no longer be a career with him. *Ecarté* and *Lansquenet* were almost as much out of the question. Billiards, as Sir Walter said of Literature, "might be a walking-stick, but never a crutch." There was, then, nothing left for it, but marriage. A rich heiress was his last *coup*, and as, in all likelihood, the thing could not be done twice, it required great circumspection.

In England this were easy enough. The manufacturing districts were grown ambitious. Cotton Lords were desirous of a more recognised nobility; and Millowners could be found ready to buy a coronet at the cost of half their fortune. But from England late events had banished him, and with a most damaged reputation.

Now, carrying nobility to the Continent, was like bringing coals to Newcastle, the whole length and breadth of the land being covered with Counts, Barons, Dukes, and Princes; and although English nobility stands on a different footing, there was no distinguishing the "real article" amid this mass of counterfeit.

Every Frenchman of small fortune was an *émigré* Count; every German, of none, was sure to be a Baron; all Poles, unwashed, uncombed, and uncared for, were of the very cream of the aristocracy; and as for Italians! it was a nation of Princes, with their uncles all Cardinals. To be a Viscount in such company was, perhaps, like Lord Castlereagh's unstarred coat, *plus distingué*, but certainly more modest. The Milor, if not associated with boundless wealth, six carriages, two couriers, three cooks, and a groom of the chambers, the whole of the "Russie," or the "Black Eagle," means nothing abroad! if not bound up with all the extravagance, and all the eccentricities of riches—if not dazzling by display, or amazing by oddity. It is a contradiction of terms; and to be an English Noble, without waste, profusion, and absurdity, is to deny your country, or be a counterfeit of your class.

Lord Norwood knew and felt all these things. They had often occupied his speculations and engaged his thoughts; so that, if his mind reverted to them now, it was to regard them as facts for future theory to

build upon, as mathematicians make use of the proofs of geometry without going over the steps which lead to conviction. No; all his present reflections took a practical form, and might be summed up in the one resolve, "I must go no further—I have done everything that a man dare do, perhaps a little more, and yet keep his footing in the world." That tacit verdict of "not proven," which had been passed upon so many of his actions, might at any moment be reversed now, and a review of his life's career presented anything but a bright retrospect. Expulsion from a great school at thirteen; three years' private dissipation and secret wickedness in a clergyman's family; a dissolute regiment, from which he was given leave to sell out at Malta; two years with the Legion, or Don Carlos, it mattered not which, in Spain; a year or so in London, with a weak attempt at reformation; a staff appointment in India obtained and sold; exposure partly hushed up; Debts; Jews; Renewals; the Fleet; the Bankruptcy Court; a few disreputable Duels; an action for seduction; ending with the last affair at Newmarket, made up the grand outline; the details comprising various little episodes, with which we must not trouble ourselves.

One incident, however, would come up prominently before his Lordship's mind, and, however little given to let the past usurp the thoughts which should be given to the present, it still insisted upon sharing his attention. This was no less than a little love affair in Spain with a "ballerina" of the Opera, with whom, by the aid of a young priest then studying at Saragossa, he had contracted a mock marriage. The sudden movement of a corps of the army to which he was attached, gave him an opportunity of an easy divorce from his bride; and it is likely he had not twice thought of her since the event had happened. Now, however, that an intention of marrying in reality occurred to him, the incident came freshly to his mind, and he jocularly wondered if his second marriage might prove more fortunate than his first.

The hour and the place were favourable to reverie. It was past midnight; all was silent and noiseless in the great Palace; the sharp ticking of the clock on the mantel-piece was the only sound to be heard, save, at a long distance off, the dull, subdued flow of the Arno; the room itself, unlighted except by the flickering wood fire, was in deep shadow; and, lulled by these influences and his mild "Manilla," Norwood was free to revel in so much of dream-land as natures like his ever explore.

Who can tell whether men of this stamp know what it is to "grieve" —whether chagrin for some momentary disappointment, anger at being thwarted, is not the nearest approach to sorrow that they ever feel? The whole course of their lives seems opposed to the notion of deep or intense

feeling, and the restless activity of their ingenious minds appears to deny the possibility of regrets. As for Norwood, he would have laughed at the puerility of going over the bygone;—therefore, if he did recur to a former incident of his life, it was involuntarily and probably induced by the accidental similarity with those which now engaged his thoughts.

"If this Dalton girl be rich," thought he, "I might do worse. There are no relatives to make impertinent inquiries, or ask awkward questions. Hester can, and must, if I desire, assist me. Living out of England, the girl herself will have heard nothing of my doings, and in name, appearance, and air, she is presentable anywhere." He thought, too, that, as a married man, his character would be in a measure rehabilitated. It would be like entering on a new road in life; and if this could be done with a certain degree of style and outlay, he had great trust in the world's charity and forgivingness to pardon all the past. "A good house and a good cook," thought he, "are the best witnesses to call to character I have ever met. Turtle and champagne have proved sovereign remedies for slander in all ages; and the man who can sport Lafitte in the evening, and split a pencil at twenty paces of a morning, may defy envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness."

To find out about this girl's fortune was then his first object. As for family, his own rank was enough for both. The matter must be done quickly. The London season over, England would be pouring its myriads of talking, gossiping travellers over the Continent, and then he should be discussed—probably avoided and shunned too.

Even already certain unmistakable signs of coolness announced themselves amongst the men of his acquaintance. George Onslow avoided play when in his company. Treviliani, one of Lady Hester's chief danglers, and the patron of the Turf in Tuscany, wouldn't even allude to a horse before him. Prince Midchikoff went further, and actually, save on rare occasions, omitted him from his dinner list. Now, although Norwood averred that he detested "*petit jeu*," hated spooney talk about racing, and dreaded the tiresome display of a "Tartar feast," these were all threatening indications, and he saw their meaning. He would willingly have fastened upon some one man—fixed a quarrel on him, and shot him. He had more than once in life adopted this policy with success; but here it would have been inapplicable, and the public opinion, he sought to bring on his own side, would have been only more inevitably arrayed against him.

"In what a mess does the want of money involve a man!" thought he, as he lay before the half-dying embers of the wood fire. "Had I won my bets on 'Chanticleer,' or had I but backed 'Amontillado,'

how different had my position been to-day. That the simple change of one name for another in my betting-book—the mere hazard of a choice—of a horse too—should influence a man's whole life, is a pretty fair instance of what the world is! Had I 'come right,' I should now be the favoured guest of some noble Duke, shooting his Grace's pheasants, drinking his Burgundy, and flirting with his daughters. Fortune willed it otherwise, and here I am, actually plotting a match with a nameless girl to rescue myself from utter ruin. Three weeks ago I would not have believed that this could happen; and who can tell what another three weeks may bring forth?—perhaps already there is mischief brewing. What if my Lady's refusal to receive this evening, may have some signification in it? Haggerstone is too courteous by half, and Jekyl has never called upon me since my arrival!" He laughed ironically as he said this, and added, "It is a bold game after all for *them* to play! Reprisals—to two of them at least—might prove awkward; and as for 'Master Albert,' he lives but on general sufferance! There has been a long run of luck against me—nothing but ill-fortune since the day I might have married Hester, and yet hung back, and that very same year she marries another, and inherits an immense fortune in India. What a blow to each of us! Such has been my lot through life; always backing the loser 'till the very moment when luck changes, and his turn comes to win."

As these thoughts passed through his mind, weariness, the silence of the hour, the darkened room, induced slumber; and although once or twice he made a half-effort to arouse himself and go home, the listless feeling gained the mastery, and he dropped off to sleep. The uneasy consciences have oftentimes very easy slumbers. Norwood's was of the calmest: not a dream, not one flitting fancy disturbed it.

It was already nigh day as he lay thus, when the dull roll of wheels beneath the window in part awoke him; at least, it so far aroused him that he remembered where he was, and fancied that it might be George Onslow, on the return from his dinner party. He lay for some minutes expecting to hear his step upon the stair, and see him enter the room; but as all seemed to resume its wonted quiet, he was dozing off again, when he heard the sound of a hand upon the lock of the door.

It is one of the strange instincts of half-slumber to be often more alive to the influence of subdued and stealthy sounds than to louder noises. The slightest whisperings, the low murmurings of a human voice, the creaking of a chair, the cautious drawing back of a curtain, will jar upon and arouse the faculties that have been insensible to the rushing flow of a cataract, or the dull booming of the sea.

Slight as were the sounds now heard, Norwood started as he listened to them, and, at once rousing himself, he fixed his eyes upon the door, in which the handle was seen to turn slowly and cautiously. The impression that it was a robber immediately occurred to him, and he determined to lie still and motionless, to watch what might happen. He was not wanting in personal courage, and had full confidence in his strength and activity.

The door at last opened: at first, a very little and slowly, then gradually more and more, 'till, by the mysterious half-light to which his eyes had grown accustomed, Norwood could see the flounces of a female dress, and the small, neat foot of a woman beneath it. The faint, uncertain flame of the fire showed him thus much, but left the remainder of the figure in deep shadow.

Whether, from excess of caution, or that she was yet hesitating what course to take, she remained for some seconds motionless; and Norwood, who had subdued his breathing to the utmost, lay in the deep shadow, speculating on the upshot of an adventure, from which he promised himself at least an amusing story. The deep black lace which fell over the arched instep indicated a degree of rank in the wearer that gave a piquancy to the incident, and imparted a zest to the curiosity of a man who probably knew no higher pleasure in life than in possessing the secrets of his acquaintance.

He had time to run over in his mind a dozen little speculations of who she was, ere she stirred; and at last, as if with change of purpose, he saw, or fancied that he saw, the door beginning slowly to close. Whether this was a mere trick of his excited imagination, or not, a sudden gesture of impatience on his part threw down one of the cushions of the sofa. A slight shriek—so slight as to be barely heard—broke from the female, and she banged the door to. Norwood reached it with a spring; but although, as he wrenched it open, he could yet hear the rustling of a woman's dress in the passage, the sharp sound of a door hastily shut and locked defied all thought of pursuit, and he stood pondering over what had happened, and almost doubtful of its reality.

"At least the fair visitor belongs to the family; that much I may rely upon," said he, as he lighted a candle to explore the locality a little closer. The corridor, however, abruptly stopped at a small door, which was locked on the inside, but to what portion of the house it led, he could not even conjecture. He was not a very unlikely man to trace the clue of such an adventure as this seemed to be. It was one of those incidents with which his course of life had made him somewhat con-

versant; and few were better able to fill up from conjecture every blank of such a history. Nor was he one to shrink from any suspicion, no matter how repugnant to every thought of honour, nor how improbable to every mind less imbued with vice than his own.

For a moment or two, however, he almost doubted whether the whole might not have been a dream. So sudden, so brief, so trackless did it all appear. This doubt was, however, quickly resolved, as his eyes fell upon the floor, where a small fragment of a lace dress lay, as it was caught and torn off in the closing door. Norwood took it up, and sat down to examine it with attention.

"Point d'Alençon," said he, "bespeaks no vulgar wearer; and such is this! Who could have thought of George Onslow playing Lothario! But this comes of Italy. And now to find her out." He ran over to himself half-a-dozen names, in which were nearly as many nationalities, but some doubt accompanied each. "No matter," thought he, "the secret will keep."

He suddenly remembered at the instant that he had promised an acquaintance to pass some days with him in the Maremma, shooting; and, not sorry to have so good a reason for a few days' absence, he arose and set out towards his hotel, having first carefully placed within his pocket-book the little fragment of lace—a clue to a mystery he was resolved to explore hereafter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRANK'S JOURNEY.

Our readers may, ere this, have surmised that Frank Dalton's career as a soldier was neither very adventurous nor exciting, since otherwise we should scarcely have so nearly forgotten him. When he parted with Hanserl to pursue his journey, his heart was full of warring and conflicting emotions, love of home, and hope of future distinction, alternately swaying him; so that while his affections drew him ever backwards, his ambitions urged him to go on.

"I could have been so happy to have lived with them," thought he, "even as a peasant lives—a life of daily toil. I would have asked for no higher fortune than that peaceful home we had made for ourselves by our own affections—the happy fireside, that sufficed us for all the blandishments of wealth and riches. Still there would have been something ignoble

in this humility—something that would ill-become my blood as a Dalton. It was not thus my ancestors understood their station—it was not with such lowly ambitions *their* hearts were stirred. Count Stephen himself might at this hour have been in obscurity and poverty—as great, perhaps, as our own—had he been thus minded; and now he is a Field-Marshal, with a 'Maria Theresa' cross on his breast! and this without one friend to counsel or to aid him! What a noble service is that where merit can win its way self-sustained and independent—where, without the indignity of a patron, the path of honourable enterprise lies free and open to all! What generous promptings, what bold aspirations such a career engenders! He shall not be ashamed of me—he shall not have to blush for the Dalton blood," said the boy, enthusiastically; and he revelled in a dream of the Old Count's ecstasy on finding a nephew so worthy of their name, and in his fancy he saw pictures of future scenes in which he figured. All of these had the same rose tint; for while in some he imagined himself winning the high rewards of great achievements, in others he was the caressed and flattered guest of rank and beauty. "To think that I should once have been thus!" cried he, laughing at the conceit, "trudging along the high-road with a knapsack on my shoulder, like a Bursch in his 'Wander-jahre;'" and then he vowed to himself "that he would have a picture taken of his humble guise as first he started in life, to hang up at some future day beside the decorated soldier he was yet to be."

Selfishness can wear many a mask. Sometimes it can array itself in features almost noble—more often its traits are of the very meanest. Frank's egotism was of the former kind. He wanted to attain distinction by an honourable path—he would not have stooped to any other. He was ready to do, or dare, all for greatness. No peril could deter, no danger could daunt him; but yet was he totally deficient in that greatest element of success—that patient discipline of the mind which, made up of humility and confidence, can wait and bide its time, earning the prizes of life before it claim them. His pride of family, however, was his greatest blemish, since it suggested a false notion of distinction—a pretension so groundless, that, like a forged bank-note, it was sure to involve even the bearer in disgrace.

So full was he of himself and his own future, that he took but little note of the way as he went. Avoiding, from a sense of pride, to associate with the "Travelling Youths," as they are called, he walked along from early morning to late evening, alone and companionless. It was mostly a dreary and uninteresting road, either leading through dark and gloomy pine forests, or over great plains of swampy surface, where the

stubble of the tall maize, or the stunted vines, were the only traces of vegetation. As he drew near the Tyrol, however, the great mountains came in sight, while the continual ascent told that he was gradually reaching the land of glaciers and snow-peaks. Day by day he found the road less and less frequented: these lonely districts were little resorted to by the wandering apprentices, so that frequently Frank did not meet a single traveller from day-dawn 'till night. Perhaps he felt little regret at this, leaving him, as it did, more time for those day-dreams in which he loved to revel. Now and then, some giant mountain, glittering in the sun; or some dark gorge, thousands of feet below him, would chase away his reverie, and leave him, for a time, in a half-bewildered and wondering astonishment; but his thoughts soon resumed their old track, and he would plod along, staff in hand, as before.

Walking from before daybreak to a late hour of the evening, Frank frequently accomplished in his day's journey as many miles as the traveller who, by post, only spent the few hours of mid-day on the road; in fact, he might have thus measured his speed, had he been less wrapped up in his own fancies, since, for several days, a calèche, drawn by three post-horses, had regularly passed him on the road, and always about the same hour.

Frank saw nothing of this; and when, on a bright and a frosty day he began the ascent of the Arlberg, he little knew that the carriage, about half a mile in front, had been his travelling-companion for the past week. Disdaining to follow the winding high-road, Frank ascended by those foot-tracks which gain upon the zig-zags, and thus soon was miles in advance of the calèche. At last he reached the half-way point of ascent, and was glad to rest himself for a few minutes on one of the benches, which German thoughtfulness for the wayfarer never neglects to place in suitable spots. A low parapet, of a couple of feet, separated the road from a deep and almost perpendicular precipice, at the foot of which, above two thousand feet beneath, stood the village of Stuben. There, was the little chapel in which he had heard his morning's mass—there, the little Platz, where he had seen the post-horses getting ready for the travellers; there, too, the little fountain, covered over with a shed of straw, and glistening with many an icicle in the bright sun. The very voices of the people reached him where he sat; and the sounds of a street-organ floated upwards through the still atmosphere. It was a scene of peaceful isolation, such as would have pleased Nelly's fancy. It was like one of those "Dorfs" she herself had often carved to amuse a winter's evening, and Frank's eyes filled up as he thought of her and of home.

The sound of feet upon the snow suddenly roused him, and, on looking round, Frank saw a traveller slowly coming up the pass. His dress at once proclaimed that he was not a pedestrian save from choice, and was merely sauntering along in advance of his carriage. In the mere cursory glance Frank bestowed upon him, he could see that he was a young and handsome man, with a certain soldierlike bearing in his air, that well suited his bold but somewhat stern features.

"You journey well, young fellow," said he, addressing Frank familiarly. "This is the fifth day we have been fellow-travellers; and although I have had post-horses, you have always kept up with me on your feet."

Frank touched his cap with a somewhat stiff courtesy at this unceremonious address; and, without deigning a reply, employed himself in arranging the straps of his knapsack.

"Are you a soldier?" asked the stranger.

"A Cadet!" replied Frank, as bluntly.

"In what regiment, may I ask?"

"The Franz Carl."

"Ah! my own old corps," said the other, gaily. "I served four years with them in the Banat. From what part of the Empire are you—you hav'n't the accent of an Austrian?"

"I am an Irishman."

"Oh! that explains it. And your name?"

"Dalton. And now, Sir, what may be yours, for I don't see why this curiosity is to be one-sided," said Frank, with an air even more insolent than the words.

"I am Count Ernest of Walstein," said the other, without a touch of irritation.

"What rank do you hold in the service?" asked Frank, boldly.

"That of Lieutenant-Colonel, boy."

"And your age may be about thirty?" said Frank, half in question and half in sarcasm.

"I was twenty-eight last August," was the calm reply.

"By Jove!" that *is* a service!" exclaimed Frank, "where a man scarcely ten years my senior may command a regiment!"

The other laughed, and after a brief pause, said, "People are in the habit of calling me fortunate, so that you must not suppose my case to be the rule."

"Be it so: even as an exception, the example is a bright one. Another may do what you have done."

"If you mean that I have earned my rank by services, boy," said the

Count, smiling, "you would make a grave mistake. My promotion had another source."

Frank looked as though he were curious to hear the explanation; but the other gave none.

"How do you call yourself?" asked he of Frank, after a pause.

"Dalton," replied the boy, more respectfully than before.

"We have a Field-Marshal of that name in the service—a most gallant old soldier, too."

"My granduncle!" cried Frank, with enthusiasm.

"Indeed! So you are a grand nephew to the Graf von Auersberg," said the Count, taking a more deliberate view than he had yet bestowed upon him. "Then how comes it you are travelling in this fashion, and on foot?"

"I have not asked you why you journey in a calèche with three horses," said Frank, insolently.

"It's my habit to do so."

"This, then, may be *mine*, Sir," said Frank, throwing his knapsack on his shoulder, and preparing to depart.

"Is not the Franz Carl at Vienna?" said the Count, not seeming to notice the irritation of his manner.

"I believe so."

"Well, then, as I am going thither, perhaps you will accept of a seat in my calèche?"

There was a frankness in the way this offer was made that suddenly routed the ill-temper Frank had fallen into. No one was less disposed than himself to accept of a favour from a perfect stranger; but the tone and manner of the proffer had, somehow, disarmed it of all appearance of such, and as he stood uncertain what answer to make, the Count added, "I'm always lucky. I was just wishing for a travelling-companion, and fortune has thrown us into acquaintanceship."

"I don't know—I can scarcely tell," said Frank, hesitating, "how or what to answer."

"You forget that we are comrades, Dalton—or shall be, at least, in another day or two," said the Count, familiarly; "so step in, and no more about it."

The calèche had drawn up as he spoke, and the Courier stood, cap in hand, beside the door, so that Frank had no time for any but an abrupt refusal, and *that* he could not give; he therefore bowed his head, and sprang in. The door was slammed sharply to, and the next moment the horses were rattling along over the snow, the merry bells of the harness jingling pleasantly as they went.

Probably no two beings could present a much stronger contrast than the two who now journeyed along side by side. The one, rich, highly placed, and distinguished with every gift of fortune at his command, and yet pleasure-sick, weary, and discontented; the other, poor, and almost friendless, full of hope, and ardent with all the buoyancy of youth. The Count was as jaded and tired of life as the Cadet was eager to enjoy it. Notwithstanding,—perhaps we should rather say—in virtue of these strong contrarieties, they made admirable travelling-companions, and the road slipped away unconsciously to each.

At Inspruck they halted for a day or two, and Frank accompanied his new friend to the cafés and theatres, mingling in the throng of those whose life is a round of easy dissipation. It is true, that to conform by dress and demeanour with these, Frank was obliged to spend the golden coins of Nelly's purse; Louis after Louis went in some one extravagance or another—sacrifices that cost him many a pang, but which, from pride, he bore up against with seeming indifference. Walstein presented him everywhere as the nephew of the old Field-Marshal von Auersberg; and as nothing was more common than to see a young Cadet dispensing the most lavish sums, with equipages, liveries, and servants, none seemed surprised that the youth should indulge in these habits and tastes of extravagance. His very enjoyment seemed like an earnest of being long habituated to these modes of life, for whether he played or drank, or in whatever excesses he mingled, there was ever the same joyous spirit; and Frank Dalton had all the outward signs of a youth rich in every accident of fortune. At first, thoughts of his humble home and of those by whose sacrifices he was enabled to indulge in such costly pleasures, would cross his mind, and, what between shame and sorrow, he felt degraded and debased before himself; but, by degrees, the levity of action induced, as it ever will do, the levity of thinking; and he suffered himself to believe that "he was no worse than others." A more fatal philosophy then this, youth never adopted, and he who seeks a low standard, rarely stops, till he falls beneath even that. Frank's pride of family made him vain, and his vanity made him credulous; he, therefore, implicitly believed all that his new companions told him. The familiar "thee" and "thou" of "camaraderie," giving an air of friendship to all the flatteries.

"Were I a nephew of a Field-Marshal like thee, I'd not serve in an infantry corps. I'd be in the Lichtenstein Hussars, or the Lancers of the Kaiser," said one.

"So he will," cried another. "Dalton only joined the Franz Carl to get his promotion quickly. Once at Vienna, he will be an officer, and ready to exchange his regiment."

"Old Auersberg can make thee what he will, lad," said a third. "He might have been Minister of War himself, if he had liked it. The Emperor Franz loved him as a brother."

"And he is rich, too; no one knows how rich," broke in a fourth. "He commanded for many years on the Turkish frontier, in those good days when our Grenzers used to make forays upon the villages, and every Pashalick paid its black mail for peace' sake."

"Thou art a lucky dog, Dalton, to find thy promotion and an inheritance thus secured to thee."

"When thou hast a regiment, lad, don't forget us, poor devils, here, that have no uncles in the 'Maria Theresa' category."

"I'd lay my life on't, that he is a Colonel before I become Rittmeister," said a young Lieutenant of Dragoons, "and I have had five years' hard service in Galicia and Servia."

"And why not?" broke in Count Walstein, who sat silently, up to this, smoking his meerschaum in a corner. "Has the Empire lost its aristocratic character? Are not birth and blood to have their claims, as of old?"

This speech met a ready acceptance, for the company consisted of those who either were, or affected to be, of noble extraction.

"How our fathers deceive themselves in trying to deceive us!" said a young Hungarian Cadet. "I, too, was sent off to join my regiment on foot. Just fancy—to walk from Arad to Presburg! I, that never went twenty miles in my life, save on the saddle. They fitted me with my knapsack—just such a thing as Dalton's. I suppose about as many florins jingled in my purse as in his. They gave me their blessing and a map of the road, with each day's journey marked out upon it. And how far did I go afoot, thinkst thou?—Two miles and a half. There I took an 'Eil Bauer,' with four good horses and a wicker calèche, and we drove our sixty, sometimes seventy miles a day. Each night we put up at some good country house or other—Honyadi's—Ctzyscheny's—Palfi's; all lay on the road, and I found out about fifty cousins I never knew of before, and made a capital acquaintance, too, the Prince Paul of Ettlingen, who, owning a regiment of Light Dragoons, took me into his corps, and, when I joined them at Leutmeritz, I was already an officer.

"What stuff it is! They preach about economy and thrift! Are we the sons of peasants or petty shopkeepers? It comes well, too, from them in their princely châteaux to tell us that we must live like common soldiers. So that, while yesterday, at it were, I sat at a table covered with silver, and drank my Tokay from a Venetian glass, tomorrow I must put up with sour Melniker or, mayhap, Bavarian beer, with black bread, and a sausage to help it down!

"Your worthy progenitors knew better in their own young days, or we should not have so many debts and mortgages on our estates—eh, Waldstein."

"I suppose the world is pretty much alike, in every age," said the Count, laughing. "It now and then takes a virtuous fit, and affects to be better than it used to be; but I shrewdly suspect that the only difference is in the hypocritical pretension. When I entered the service—and it is not so many years ago that I cannot recollect it—the cant was, to resemble that rough school of the days of old Frederick and Maria Theresa. Trenck's 'Pandours,' with their scarlet breeches stuffed into their wide boot-tops, were the mode; and to wear your moustache to your shoulders—to cry, 'Bey'm Henker!' and 'Alle Blitzen!' every moment, were the veritable types of the soldier. Now we have changed all that. We have the Anglo-mania of English grooms and equipages, top-boots, curricles, hurdle races, champagne suppers. Dalton will be the 'ton' in his regiment, and any extravagance he likes to launch into, certain to have its followers."

The youth blushed deeply; partly in conscious pride at the flattery, partly in the heartfelt shame at its inappropriateness to himself; and even the sincerity with which his comrades drank his health, could not drown the self-reproaches he was suffering under.

"Thou art an only son, too, Dalton!" said another. "What favours fortune will shower upon one happy fellow! Here am I, one of seven; and, although my father is a Count of the Empire, four of us have to take service in the infantry."

"What of that?" said a dark-complexioned fellow, whose high cheek bones and sharp under-jaw bespoke a Pole. "I am a Second-Lieutenant in the regiment that my grandfather raised and equipped at his own cost; and if I were to lose a thousand florins at 'Lansquenet' to-morrow, I'd be broke, like the meanest 'Bursch' in the corps."

"It's better to be a rich Englander," cried one.

"And with a Field-Marshal for a granduncle!" chimed in another.

"And a 'Maria Theresa' to ask for thy grade as officer," said a third.

"It's a jolly service to all of us," said a young Bohemian, who, although but a Cadet, was a Prince, with a princely fortune. "I ask for nothing but a war to make it the best life going."

"A war with whom?" cried several together.

"What care I with whom or where. With Prussia, if you will, to fight out our old scores about Franconia—with Russia, if you like better, for the Danubian provinces, and her Servian supremacy—with France; she's always ready, with a cause or without one—with Italy;

to round off our frontier, and push our limits to the Appennines—I'd say, with England, only Dalton mightn't like it."

"And where would you pick your quarrel with England?" said Frank, laughing.

"Easily enough—through our Ambassador at the Porte, or some outlying station, where Russia is her rival."

"Hang your politics," broke in a Hungarian. "Let us fight when the time comes, but not bother our heads about the cause. I'd rather take my chance of a sabre-cut any day, than addle my brains with too much thought. Here's to you, Dalton—mayst soon be a Rittmeister of Hussars, lad; a prouder thing thou needst not ask for."

"Thou shalt give us a jolly supper at the 'Schwan,' Dalton, when we meet at Vienna," said another.

"And we'll pledge those fair sisters of thine—and they're both handsome, I'll be sworn—in the best Tokay Palfi's vineyard can yield."

"My regiment will be in garrison, in the Leopoldstadt, next month, and I'll remind thee of this pledge."

"And we shall be at Lintz," broke in another; "and thou mayst reckon on me, if I have to suffer an arrest for it afterwards."

"So it is agreed, Dalton, we are thy guests. For what day shall it be?"

"Ay, let us name the day," cried several together.

"When he is named an officer," said Walstein, "that will be time enough."

"Nay, nay—the day month after he arrives at Vienna," cried the Bohemian. "I have given three breakfasts and five suppers on the occasion of my promotion, and the promotion has never come yet."

"The day month after I arrive, then, be it," said Dalton. "We meet at—where is it?"

"The 'Schwan,' lad—the first *restaurant* of Europe. Let men talk as they will of the Cadran Bleu and the Trois Frères, I'd back Hetzinger's cook against the world; and as for wine, he has Steinkammer at thirty florins the flask! And we'll drink it too—eh, Dalton? and we'll give a 'Hoch Lebe' to that old grandfather or granduncle of thine. We'll add ten years to his life."

"A poor service to Dalton!" said another; "but here comes Walstein's horses, and now for a last glass together before we part."

The parting seemed, indeed, to be "sweet sorrow," for each leave-taking led to one flask more, friendship itself appearing to make wondrous progress as the bottle went round. The third call of the postilion's bugle—a summons that even German loyalty could scarcely have

"Our worthy progenito[illegible] and Frank once more
we should not have so m[illegible] hands contested for
Walstein?"

"I suppose the world i[illegible] wishes mingled with the
Count, laughing. "It n[illegible] ecstasy of delight; "such
be better than it used to [illegible]
ence is in the hypocri[illegible] and lighted his meerschaum
and it is not so many y[illegible] too full of his own thoughts
to resemble that rou[illegible] a moment that Dalton could
Theresa. Trenck's [illegible] the blandishments and caresses
their wide boot-top[illegible] admit of any rivalry in his mind:
your shoulders—t[illegible] of home, it was to picture to
moment, were th[illegible] in the society of these high-born
all that. We h[illegible] of notice he attracted; and even
top-boots, curi[illegible] a gentle, half-reluctant assent
the 'ton' in his [illegible] expensive, was sure to be honour-
certain to hav[illegible]

The youth [illegible] thought he, "if he saw me seated
partly in th[illegible] sounding names are the pride of
even the sim[illegible] Lichtensteins, the Schwartenschilds,
drown the s[illegible] the Hapsburgs themselves! Little
"Thou [illegible] families were the great lights of his-
fortune wil[illegible] eyes on me this last evening! when,
and, altho[illegible] called me comrade!" From this he
take servi[illegible] uncle, investing the old Field-Marshal
"Wha[illegible] attribute, and, above all, fancying him
bones an[illegible] and kindness. What hosts of questions did
in the r[illegible] his sisters—how often had he to repeat
and if I [illegible] resemblances, going over the most minute
be broke[illegible] and recounting the simplest incidents of their
"It's [illegible] would know all."
"And [illegible] he fell fast asleep, even in his dreams to
"And [illegible] that, waking, had no control of reason.
thind[illegible] from a sound sleep and a pleasant dream of
"It's [illegible] of a mounted Dragoon, ordering the postilion
altho[illegible] he saw that they were drawn up close be-
for noth[illegible] wooden bridge that crosses the Danube, under
"A[illegible] The whole scene was one of wonderment and sur-
"W[illegible] as it were, rolled the stream of the rapid
fight[illegible] flood splashing and foaming amid the fragments
betw[illegible] the mountain regions, and which every moment
Fran[illegible]

arp outline of every object stood out, crisp and well-defined, in the
tmosphere. Nothing could be more favourable for the effect of
spectacle. The bright weapons glanced and glittered like silver
gay trappings and brilliant uniforms showed in all their splendour
scarlet Lancers, the blue-clad Hussars, the Cuirassiers, with their
ng helmets, vied with each other in soldierlike bearing; while
nse mass of infantry moved along with a surging, waving motion,
a vast sea heaving with a ground-swell. It was an army complete
ry detail—for even to the "ambulances" for the wounded, every-
was there!

review by the Emperor!" said Walstein; "and see, there comes
uff." And he pointed to a group of horsemen, whose waving plumes
ating dolmans were seen at a little distance off in the plain.

h, let us follow them!" cried Frank, enthusiastically. "Such a
is sight as this I never even imagined."

ou'll see enough—perhaps too many such!" said the Count,
dly. "It's a favourite pastime of our old General's, to drag us out
rters in the very depth of winter, and spend a day in the snow of
ater."

Who could have a thought for weather, or hardship, when engaged
a scene?" said Frank.

, evidently, think those worthy Field-Marshals and Generals of
m, who, well mounted, and swathed in furs, canter down to the
l, an hour after we have reached it, and ride back again when
ave 'taken the salute,' leaving us to plod wearily home, through
ds and sloppy streets, to our cold barracks. But just the reverse
opinion of those poor fellows yonder, with blue faces and frost-

Frank gazed at the regiment with a strange sensation of hope and fear.

"There lies my destiny!" thought he. "Who knows what friendships or enmities await me, yonder? What hearts in that dashing corps will beat responsively with my own—what sources of sorrow or offence may I meet with amongst them!"

"I wish thou hadst a better regiment, Dalton," said Walstein.

"How a better? Is it not a brave and distinguished corps?"

"Brave enough," said the other, laughing; "and as for distinction, an Archduke owns and commands it. But that is not what I mean. The regiment is a poor one; the officers are from Upper Austria, with little or no fortune—fellows who dine for a zwanziger, play dominoes for kreutzers, waltz at the wine-gardens, and fight duels with sabres."

Frank laughed at the description; but his laugh had more of pain than mirth about it, for he felt at every moment the false position he occupied, and how inextricably complicated his circumstances were becoming. Every allusion to others, showed him in what light he was himself regarded. Was this deception honourable?—was it possible to continue it?" were the questions that would obtrude upon him, and to which no ingenuity could find answer.

"There's the corps for you, Dalton," said Walstein, drawing his attention to the "Hungarian Guard," all glittering with gold embroidery and mounted upon the most beautiful white chargers—at once the most perfect riders and the best mounted cavalry in Europe. "In that regiment you are certain of being quartered either here or in Prague. The laced jackets are too costly wear to send down to the Banat, or amongst the wilds of Wallachia. Besides, the Empress likes to see these gay fellows on their 'Schimmels' beneath the Palace windows. Your uncle will, of course, grumble a little about the cost; perhaps your father, too, will look a little grave when he hears of six thousand florins for a 'Dolman,' and four for a 'Schabrach;' while ten or twelve horses—very least you could keep—would scarcely sound like a moderate stud. Still, depend upon it, the corps is as good for service as it is cost, and Creptowitz, their Colonel, is a true Hussar."

For a moment Dalton hesitated whether he should not make an honest avowal of his narrow fortune, and tell that he had no pretension to such habits of cost and expense; but shame was too powerful to permit the acknowledgment. He had already gone too far to retract, and felt that any candour now would be the confession of a cheat. If there were harassing and torturing reflections, one flickering ray of hope glimmered through the gloom; and this was, what he might expect from his uncle. "If he be really rich, as they say," thought Frank;

his favour be so great with the Emperor, even such a career as this may not be above my prospects." As he revolved these thoughts, he sat with his head buried between his hands, forgetful of where he was and all around him.

"You're losing everything, Dalton," said Walstein. "See, there go the 'Kaiser Jägers,' with their bugles, the finest in the service; and yonder are the Lichtenstein 'Light Horse,' mounted on thorough-bred cattle; and there, to the left, those savage-looking fellows with long beards, they are the 'Croat Grenadiers.' But here comes the Emperor!" And, as he spoke, one deafening cheer burst forth along the line, and was echoed back from the walls of Vienna; while every band struck up the national hymn of Austria, and the proud notes of "God preserve the Emperor!" floated through the air.

A brilliant staff of Generals of every arm of the service accompanied "the Kaiser;" and Walstein ran quickly over the names of these, many of whom were among the first nobility of the Empire. Some, were the war-worn veterans of the great campaigns; some, the young hopes of Austrian chivalry; but, conspicuous above all, was a figure, whose stature, as well as the singularity of his uniform, attracted Frank's notice. He was a very tall old man, dressed in a uniform of purple velvet slashed with gold, and actually covered with the crosses and decorations of various orders. His cap was a tall chako of red-brown fur, from which a long straight scarlet plume floated, and beneath which his grey hair was fastened in a queue, that hung half-way down his back. Yellow buskins, ornamented with massive gold spurs, completed a costume which seemed almost a compromise between the present and some bygone age.

The figure of the wearer, too, suited well this impression. There was a stern rigidity of look as he sat still and motionless in his saddle, which relaxed into the polished urbanity of an old Courtier as often as the Emperor addressed him. When bowing to the mane of his charger, he seemed the very type of courtesy; while, as he retired his horse, there was all the address and ease of a practised rider.

"There, to the left of Walmoden, on the powerful black horse, do you see that handsome old man in the purple tunic?" asked Walstein.

"I have been watching him for several minutes back," replied Frank. "What a singular uniform!"

"Yes. It was the dress of the Artillery of the Imperial Guards, in the days of Wagram and Lobau; and he is permitted to retain it, by a special leave of the Emperor—a favour he only avails himself of on occasions like the present."

"What a mass of orders he wears!"

"He has all that the Empire can bestow, from the 'Iron Cross,' to the 'Maria Theresa.' He has the 'Legion of Honour,' too, sent him by Napoleon himself! It was that officer who at Elchingen rode up to the head of a French column, and told them that the waggons they were pursuing were the 'ammunition of the rear guard!' 'If you advance,' said he, 'we'll fire them, and blow you and ourselves to atoms!' The coolness and heroism of the daring were well acknowledged by a brave enemy. The French halted, and our train proceeded on its way. Mayhap you have heard the anecdote before?"

"Never," said Frank, still gazing with admiration at the old soldier.

"Then I may as well tell you that he is the Count Dalton von Auersberg," said Walstein, lying back to enjoy the youth's amazement.

"What! Uncle Stephen?—Is that our uncle?" burst out Frank, in delight.

"I wish I could call him 'ours,' with all my heart," said Walstein, laughing. "Any man might well be proud of such a relative."

But Frank never heard nor heeded the remark; his whole soul was wrapped up in the contemplation of the old Field-Marshal, on whom he gazed as a devotee might have done upon his saint.

"He's like my father," muttered Frank, half aloud; "but haughtier-looking, and older. A true Dalton in every feature! How I long to speak to him—to tell him who I am."

"Not here, though—not here!" said Walstein, laying his hand on the youth's arm, for he almost feared lest he should give way to the sudden impulse. "Were you even the Colonel of your regiment, you could not approach him now."

Frank stared with some surprise at a remark which seemed to treat so slightingly the ties of blood and kindred; while Walstein, by no means easy on the score of his companion's prudence, gave the word to the postilion to drive on; and they entered the city of Vienna.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE THREAT OF "A SLIGHT EMBARRASSMENT."

THE Mazzarini Palace was now a proverb for all that was dissipated and extravagant throughout Florence, and in proportion as the society which frequented it was select and few in number, the more absurd were the rumours that went abroad of its dissipations and excesses. In default of a real good tangible scandal, the world invented a thousand shadowy little slanders, that, if not as deadly to reputation, at once, were just as certain to kill character, in the long run.

Sir Stafford's gout, of which he was confined to his bed or a sofa, was pronounced the lingering agonies of a broken heart. "My Lady's" late dinners were orgies where every licentiousness held sway. George was a reckless gambler, who had already jeopardized all the wealth of his family; and, as for Kate, she was at the mercy of that amiable temperament of the human mind, which always believes the worst, and as constantly draws the darkest inference from its belief.

Now, Sir Stafford was very gouty, very irritable, and very unhappy to boot about a number of matters, which, however deeply interesting to himself, should have had no concern for the world. My Lady did dine at eleven o'clock at night, and the company was assuredly not that from which a discriminating public would have selected Archbishops, or even Minor Canons, consisting for the most part of that class of which we have already made mention in a former chapter, with now and then some passer-through of rank, or some stray diplomate on his way to or from his post. George Onslow was a large loser at play, but without having recourse to those stratagems for payment which were so generally ascribed to him. While Kate—poor Kate—was neither better nor worse than the reader has hitherto known her.

We do not in this admission seek to conceal the fact that she was very different from what first we saw her. Society had taught her tact, grace, and elegance of deportment. Admiration had rendered her—yes, we say it advisedly—admiration had rendered her very attractive, drawing forth a thousand resources of fascination, and a thousand arts of pleasing, that often wither and die in the cold chill of neglect. The most fastidious critic could not have detected a fault in her manner: an ill-natured one might have objected to what seemed an excess of gracefulness; but even this was relieved by a youthful freshness and

[illegible]

[illegible] Lady Hester's [illegible] she knew [illegible] woman in [illegible] to her [illegible] was distinguished by rank or station. We [illegible] argument, but assuredly it [illegible] Lady Hester's own claims, besides [illegible] admitted. She was, although not very young, [illegible] her rank and wealth both considerable, and [illegible] which she belonged. If her affection for Kate was only another form of selfishness, it was not the less [illegible] account. She was the confidant of her sorrows—by no means a [illegible] office; the chief counsellor in all her plans; she was the lay-figure on which she experimented a hundred devices in costume and toilet; and lastly—greatest charm of all—she was a dependant. Not, indeed, that Kate herself so understood her position; pride of family, the Dalton heritage, was too powerful in her to admit of this. Deeply, sincerely grateful she was for all Lady Hester's kindness; her affection she returned tenfold; but no sense of inferiority mingled with this feeling, save that which arose from her own devoted admiration of her friend.

The homage amid which she passed her life, the unceasing flow of flatteries around her, were not very likely to undeceive on this point. A more respectful devotion could not have waited on a Princess of the royal [illegible]. The great Midchikoff gave balls in her honour. The Arab [illegible] of Trevillani were all placed at her disposal. The various visits to

objects of curiosity or taste were arranged for her pleasure, and nothing omitted that could tend to stimulate her vanity and heighten her self-esteem.

The utmost we can say for her, all this while, is, that if she was carried away by the excitement of this adulation, yet that, in heart, she was as little corrupted as was well possible. She could not be other than enamoured of a life so unchanging in its happiness, nor could she disconnect the enjoyments around her from the possession of great wealth. She thought of what she had been a few months back: the "same Kate Dalton," braving the snows of a dark German winter, with threadbare cloak and peasant "sabots;" an object of admiration to none except to poor Hanserl, perhaps! And yet now, unchanged, unaltered, save in what gold can change, how different was her position. It had been well if her love of splendour had stopped here. It went, further, however, and inspired a perfect dread of humble fortune.

Over and over again did she hear disparaging remarks bestowed upon the striving efforts of "respectable poverty," its contrivances derided, its little straits held up to ridicule. In dress, equipage, or household, whatever it did, was certain to be absurd; and yet all of these people, so laughed at and scorned, were in the enjoyment of means far above her own father's!

What a false position was this! How full of deceit must she become to sustain it! She invoked all her sophistry to assure herself that their condition was a mere passing state; that at some future—perhaps not even a remote one—they should have "their own again;" and that, as in family and descent, they were the equals of any, so they were not inferior in all the just claims to consideration and respect. She tried to think of her father and Nelly moving in the circles she now lived in; but, even alone, and in the secrecy of her own thoughts, her cheek became scarlet with shame, and she actually shuddered at the very notion. And even Frank, her once ideal of all that was graceful and noble-looking, how would he pass muster beside these essenced "fashionables" who now surrounded her! She endeavoured to console herself by thinking that her father would have despised the lounging, unmanly lives they led; that Ellen would have retired in bashful modesty from a society whose tone of freedom and license would have shocked her; and that Frank would have found no companionship in a class, whose pleasures lay only in dissipation; and yet, all her casuistry could not reassure her. The fascinations amid which she lived were stronger than her reason.

She became first aware of the great change in herself, on recognising how differently a letter from home affected her, to what it had done

[illegible] her room, and [illegible] with dearest Nelly— [illegible] in every line. [illegible] with arms clasped [illegible] she leaned over her [illegible] her. How every allu- [illegible] little chamber of an [illegible] and Nelly brought out [illegible] some passage. [illegible] and then the little discus- [illegible] the fashion of [illegible] by her father, whose [illegible]

[illegible] such trifling occurrence of [illegible] in her last group: its [illegible] and wonder how to meet them! [illegible] she read the minutest details of [illegible] and how her heart [illegible] though all the tidings were, that [illegible] spoke little of himself or the service."

[illegible] which a letter used to bring up, [illegible] of anxiety and shame — anxiety, she [illegible] because Nelly's writing on the [illegible] while the paper and the seal be- [illegible] with epistolary elegance. The [illegible] with a high-beating heart, she now clutched [illegible] lest others should see and mark its [illegible]

How differently, too, did the contents affect her: so long as they referred to herself in her own latest narratives of her life, she read with avidity and pleasure. Nelly's innocent wonderment was a very delightful sensation; her affectionate participation in her happiness was all grateful; even her gentle warnings against the seductions of such a career, were not unpleasing; but the subject changed to home, and what an alteration came over her spirit! How dark and dismal became the picture—how poverty-stricken each incident and event—what littleness in every detail—how insignificant the occupations that interested them!

How great the surprise she felt, at their interest in such trifles! how astonished that their hopes and fears, their wishes or their dreads, could take so mean a form! This came with peculiar force before her, from a paragraph that closed Nelly's last letter, and which ran thus:—

"Think of our happiness, dearest Kate! We have just seen one who

saw you lately—one of your Florence acquaintances; and I believe I might go further, and say friends, for the terms in which he spoke of you evinced sincere and true regard. It was so kind of him to find us out, just to come and tell us about you; indeed, he remained a day here for no other purpose, since his diplomatic duties were urging him to England with speed."

When Kate had read thus far, she stopped; her face and neck crimson with shame, and her heart beating almost audibly. With lightning rapidity she ran over to herself three or four names of Ministers and Envoys who had lately left Florence, trembling to think it might be the gorgeous Russian, Naradskoi, the princely Neapolitan, Camporese, or the haughty Spaniard, Don Hernandez Orloes, who had visited their humble interior. What a humiliation for her, if she were ever to see them again! Home, at that instant, presented itself before her but as the witness of her shame: how sordid and miserable did its poverty appear, and with what vulgarity associated! Her poor old father, around whose neck, but a moment before, she would have hung with rapture, she shrunk from with very terror: his dress, his look, his accent,—every word he spoke, every allusion he made, were tortures to her; and Nelly—even Nelly—how she blushed to fancy her humble guise, and poor exterior; the little dress of coloured wool, from the pockets of which her carving tools appeared; and then how the scene rose before her!—her father producing Nelly's last work, some little group in clay or wood. She pictured to herself his pride—her sister's bashfulness—the stranger's pretended admiration! 'Till now, these emotions had never seemed a counterfeit. Oh! how she shuddered as her thoughts took more and more the colours of reality, and the room itself, and its poverty-struck furniture, rose before her! At last she read on:

"His visit was of course a great honour, and probably, had he come on any other errand but to speak of you, we should have been half overwhelmed with the condescension; but in very truth, Kate, I quite forgot all his greatness and his grandeur, and lost sight of his ever holding any higher mission than to bring news of my dearest sister. Papa, of course, asked him to dinner. I believe he would have invited the Czar himself under like circumstances; but, fortunately for us, for him, and perhaps for you too, he was too deaf to hear the request, and politely answered that he would send my letter to you, with pleasure, under his own diplomatic seal; and so we parted. I ought to add, that Mr. Foglass intends speedily to return to Florence."

Three or four times did Kate read this name over before she could persuade herself that she had it aright. Foglass! she had never even heard

[illegible]

[illegible] laughing; [illegible] it will not be very hard to [illegible]

[illegible] Less [illegible] and Charles, who, I [illegible] He was a Consul at [illegible] showed him the name [illegible] something more, [illegible] perquisites—neither passports [illegible] his wisdom once again to [illegible] Foreign Office. But how do you happen to ask about him?"

"Some of my friends met him in Germany," said she, hesitatingly. She might have blushed, had Jekyl looked at her; but he knew better, and took pains to bestow his glances in another direction.

"It would be kind to tell them that the man is a most prying, inquisitive sort of creature, who, if he only had the sense of hearing, would be as mischievous as Purvis."

"I fancy they will see but little of him," said she, with a saucy toss of the head. "He made their acquaintance by affecting to know *me*. I'm sure I've no recollection of having ever seen *him*."

"Of course you never knew him, Miss Dalton?" replied he, with a subdued horror in his voice as he spoke.

"A letter for you, Mademoiselle," said the servant to Kate; "and the man waits for an answer."

Kate broke the seal with some trepidation. She had no correspondents nearer than her home, and wondered what this might mean. It was in a strange commotion of spirit that she read the following lines:—

"Mrs. Montague Ricketts presents her respectful compliments to Miss Dalton, and begs to know at what hour to-day Mrs. M. R. may wait upon Miss D., to present a letter which has been committed to Mrs. R.'s hands for personal delivery. It may secure an earlier hour of audience if Mrs. R. mentions that the precious document is from Miss D.'s father."

What could this possibly mean? It was but that very same day the post brought her a letter from Nelly. Why had not her father said what he wished to say, in that? What need of this roundabout, mysterious mode of communicating?

The sight of the servant still in waiting for the answer recalled her from these cross-questionings, and she hurried away to consult Lady Hester about the reply.

"It's very shocking, my dear child," said she, as she listened to the explanation. "The Ricketts, they tell me, is something too dreadful; and we have escaped her hitherto. You couldn't be ill, could you?"

"But the letter?" said Kate, half smiling, half provoked.

"Oh, to be sure—the letter! But Buccellini, you know, might take the letter, and leave it, with unbroken seal, near you; you could read it just as well. I'm sure I read everything Sir Stafford said in his without ever opening it. You saw that yourself, Kate, or, with your scepticism, I suppose, you'd not believe it, for you are very sceptical; it is your fault of faults, my dear. D'Esmonde almost shed tears about it, the other day. He told me that you actually refused to believe in the Madonna della Torre, although he showed you the phial with the tears in it!"

"I only said that I had not seen the Virgin shed them," said Kate.

"True, child; but you saw the tears! and you heard D'Esmonde remark, that when you saw the garden of a morning, all soaked with wet, the trees and flowers dripping, you never doubted that it had

[illegible] although you might not have been awake [illegible]

[illegible] was unprepared with an answer [illegible] remote from the object of her visit.

[illegible] said Lady Hester, with the triumphant [illegible] of prejudice—"Protestant [illegible] real distinction to make [illegible] between [illegible] reason, Kate. Do you understand me [illegible]

"I'm sure [illegible]" said Kate, adroitly [illegible]

"Very [illegible] woman altogether. I suppose you [illegible] for it! Say three o'clock, and I [illegible] with the gallery and the library between [illegible] dreadful voice."

"Has she such?" [illegible]

"I'm sure I [illegible] but of course she has! Those [illegible] Make the visit as brief as possible, Kate. [illegible] anything after. Use your eye glass on every [illegible] can be short-sighted enough never to know her [illegible] very supercilious at [illegible] child—it is precisely the manner for this interview. It was really very wrong of your papa [illegible] your sister, or whoever it was. Nobody thinks of anything but the post, now-a-days. [illegible] tell them so; say it makes [illegible] you see I am nervous to-day. There, there! I don't want [illegible]—but everything [illegible] gone wrong to-day. Midchikoff has given away his box, and I have promised mine to the Lucchesini: and that [illegible] flounce is much too narrow, so Celestine tells me; but I'm sure she has cut a piece off it to make a 'berthe' for herself. And then the flowers are positively [illegible]. They are crimson, instead of cherry-colour, although I told [illegible] twice over that they ought to be the very tint of Lady Melgund's [illegible] There, now; good-by. Remember all I've been saying, and [illegible] forget that this is a 'Giorno infelice,' and everything one does will [illegible] unlucky. I hope D'Esmonde will not come to-day. I'm really [illegible] to controversy this morning. I should like to see Buccellini, however, and have a globule of the Elysian essence. By-by: do think better about the 'Madonna della Torre,' and get rid of that odious Ricketts' affair as speedily as may be."

With these injunctions, Kate withdrew to indite her reply to Mrs. Ricketts, appointing three o'clock on that same afternoon for a visit, which she assuredly looked forward to with more of curiosity than pleasure.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A CONVIVIAL EVENING.

It is not necessary that the reader should participate in Kate Dalton's mystification regarding her father's letter, that document being simply a piece of Ricketts' strategy, and obtained to secure an admission to the Mazzarini Palace, which, notwithstanding Lord Norwood's assurances, still remained an impregnable fortress to all her assaults.

Foglass was then commissioned to induce Mr. Dalton to write something—anything, to his daughter, to be transmitted under the Embassy seal—a magnificent mode of conveyance, which was reason enough to call into exercise those powers of penmanship which, since he had ceased to issue promissory notes, had lain in the very rustiest state of disuse. The command to obtain this credential reached Foglass just as he was about to start from Baden; but being desirous, for various little social reasons, to conciliate the Ricketts' esteem, he at once altered his arrangements, and feigning a sudden attack of gout—a right royal malady—he took himself to bed, and sent a few lines to Dalton, detailing his misfortune, and entreating a visit.

Never backward in the cause of good-nature, poor Dalton sallied forth at night, and notwithstanding the cutting blasts of a north wind, and the sharp driftings of the half-frozen snow, held on his way to the "Russie," where, in a very humble chamber for so distinguished a guest, lay Mr. Foglass in the mock agonies of gout.

"How devilish kind of you—how very considerate!" said Foglass, as he gave one finger of his hand to shake. "So like poor Townsend, this—Lord Tom we used to call him. Not wet, though, I hope?"

"And if I was, it wouldn't be the first time. But how are you, yourself—where is the pain?"

"You must speak louder; there's a kind of damper on the voice in this room."

"Where's the pain?" screamed Dalton.

"There—there—no need to roar," whispered the other. "The pain is here—over the stomach, round the ribs, the back—everywhere."

"Ah, I know it well," said Dalton, with a wry contortion of the face. It's the devil entirely when it gets under the short ribs! It begins like a rat nibbling you, as it might be, biting away little bits, with now and then a big slice that makes you sing out; and then the teeth begin to

get hot, and he bites quicker, and tears you besides—sure I know it, this many a year."

To this description, of which Foglass heard nothing, he bowed blandly, and made a sign to Dalton to be seated near him.

"You'd like a little wine and water, I'm sure," said he, with the air of a man who rarely figured as a host, and liked it more rarely still.

"Spirits and water—boiling water—with sugar and a squeeze of lemon, is what I'll take; and see now, you'd not be worse of the same yourself. I've an elegant receipt for the gout, but whether it's sulphur or saltpetre's in it, I don't well remember; but I know you mix it with treacle, ash-bark, and earth-worms, the yolk of four eggs, and a little rosemary. But as you mightn't like the taste of it at first, we'll just begin with a jug of punch."

The waiter had by this time made his appearance, and the order being communicated by a most expressive pantomime of drinking, and the few solitary words of German Dalton possessed, the room assumed a look of sociality to which Dalton's presence very mainly contributed.

In the confidence such a moment of secrecy suggested, Foglass produced an ear-trumpet—a mark of the most unbounded good faith on his part, and which, had Dalton known him better, he would have construed into a proof of implicit reliance on his honour.

"I've been many years at Constantinople," said he, adjusting the instrument, "and the confounded muezzin has made me a little deaf. It's an everlasting calling to prayers, day and night, there."

"How they ever expect to get to heaven by tormentin' and teazin', is more than I know," said Dalton.

"They're Mahommedans!" said Foglass, with the air of a man uttering a profound sentiment.

"Aye, to be sure," observed Dalton; "it's not like Christians. Now, is it true, they tell me they never eat salt meat?"

"Never!"

"Think of that! Not a bit of corned beef, nor as much as a leg of pork——"

"Wouldn't hear of it," interrupted Foglass. "Wine, too, is forbidden."

"And punch?"

"Of course, punch also. A pipe, a cup of coffee, the bath, and a little opium, are the luxuries of Turkish existence."

"To the devil I fling them all four," cried Dalton, impatiently. "How a man is to be social beside a coffee-pot, or up to his neck in hot water,

beats me entirely. Faix! I don't envy the Turks!" And he sipped his glass as he spoke, like one who had fallen upon a happier destiny.

"If you'll mix me a very small glass of that punch, I'd like to propose a toast," said Foglass.

"There, now, that's spoke like a sensible man; pleasant company and social enjoyment are the greatest enemies to the gout. Make your mind easy, and keep your heart light, and the devil a fear but your knees will get limber, and the swellin' will leave your ankles; but weak punch and tiresome people would undhermine the best constitution in the world. Taste that."

To judge from Mr. Foglass's face, Dalton had at least provided one element of health for his companion.

"It is very strong,—very strong, indeed!" said he, puckering up his eyes.

"It's the fault of the water hereabouts," said Dalton. "It doesn't mix right with the spirits; so that one-half—the first, generally—of our liquor tastes stiff, but the bottom is mild as milk."

The explanation gave such encouragement to Foglass, that he drank away freely, and it was only when he had finished that he remembered his intention of giving a toast.

"Now, Mr. Dalton," said he, as he sat up with a replenished glass in his hand, "I am going to redeem my pledge, and about to give you the health of the most beautiful girl in Italy—one whose attractions are the theme of every tongue, and whose ambitions may realise any height, or attain any eminence, that she pleases."

"Here's to you, Kate Dalton," broke in the father, "my own sweet child; and if you only come back to me as you went away, the sorrow better I ask, or grander."

"She will be a Duchess; she may be a Princess if she likes."

"Who knows,—who knows?" said Dalton, as he hung down his head, and hammered away with his spoon at the sugar in his glass.

"Every one knows, every one sees it, Mr. Dalton," said Foglass, authoritatively. "From the Archduke Ernest of Austria to the very pages of the Court, all are her worshippers and admirers. She'll come back to you with a proud name and a high coronet, Mr. Dalton."

"The devil a better than Dalton ever 'twill be! *that* I can tell you. 'Tisn't yesterday we took it, the same name; there's stones in the churchyard of Ballyhack can show who we are; and if she married the—the—God forgive me, I was going to say the Pope, but I meant the Grand Turk—she wouldn't be better than she is now, as Kate Dalton."

"Not better, certainly, but in a more exalted rank; in a position of more recognised distinction," said Foglass, blandly.

"No; nor that neither," cried Dalton, angrily. "The l
back to the ancient times of all. There's one of our name
I'm not sure where, but I believe it's in the Book of King
the Psalms; but wherever it is, he was a real gentleman,
own estate, with his livery-servants, and his horses, and e
good style about him; high on the Grand Jury,—maybe t
the county."

Foglass, who had followed this description but imperfectl
bow in a deep acknowledgment of what he did not underst

"The man that marries Kate Dalton isn't doing a pie
scension, any how! that I can tell him. The dirty acres m
from us, but our good blood won't."

"No man has a higher veneration for blood, Sir," s
proudly; "few men have better reason for the feeling."

"Is Fogles an old stock?" asked Dalton, eagerly.

"Foglass, like Fitzroy, Sir, may mean more than loyalt
to avow. My father, Mr. Dalton—but this is a very sad
me, let us change it; let us drink to a better feeling in ou
when that abominable statute may be erased from our code
offspring of suspicion and distrust shall no longer be the
opprobrium of Englishmen. Here's to its speedy and everla

The word was talismanic to Dalton, connected, as it was,
with but one subject. He arose at once, and holding up
the air, cried out,

"Hip! hip! hurra! three cheers and success to it! Rep

Foglass echoed the sentiment with equal enthusiasm, and
glass to the bottom, exclaimed,

"Thank you, Dalton! thank you; the heartiness of th
me we are friends; and although you know not what my f
indeed none can—you can execrate with honest indignation
unions."

"Bad luck to it!" exclaimed Dalton, with energy. "V
grace nor luck since we saw it!"

"Those petty German sovereigns with their territorie
Hyde Park!" said Foglass, with intense contempt.

"Just so. The Hessians!" chimed in Dalton, who had
sciousness that the other was alluding to the troops of th
once quartered in Ireland.

"Let us change the topic, Dalton," said Foglass, pathe
wiped his brow like a man dispelling a dark train of thoug
to that charming young lady I saw last evening, a worthy
beautiful Miss Dalton."

"A better child never breathed," said Dalton, drinking off his glass. "My own poor Nelly," muttered he, below his breath, "'tis better than handsome ye are—true-hearted, and fond of your old father."

"She has accomplishments, Sir, that would realise a fortune; that is," said he, perceiving the dark cloud that passed over Dalton's features—"that is, if she were in a rank of life to need it."

"Yes—very true—just so," stammered out Dalton, not quite sure how to accept the speech. "'Tis a fine thing to be able to make money; not that it was ever the gift of the Daltons. We were real gentlemen to the backbone; and there wasn't one of the name, for five generations—barring Stephen—that could earn sixpence if he was starving."

"But Stephen, what could he do?" inquired Foglass, curious to hear of this singular exception to the family rule.

"He took to soldiering in the Austrian army, and he's a Field-Marshal, and I don't know what more besides, this minute. My son Frank's there now."

"And likes it?"

"Troth, he doesn't say a great deal about that. His letter is mighty short, and tells very little more than where he's quartered—how hard worked he is—and that he never gets a minute to himself, poor fellow!"

"Miss Kate, then, has drawn the prize in the Lottery of Life?" said Foglass, who was anxious to bring the subject back to her.

"Faix! that's as it may be," said the other, thoughtfully. "Her letters is full of high life and great people, grand dances and balls, and the rest of it; but sure, if she's to come back here again and live at home, won't it come mighty strange to her?"

"But in Ireland, when you return there, the society, I conclude, is very good?" asked Foglass, gradually drawing him on to revelations of his future intentions and plans.

"Who knows if I'll ever see it again? The estate has left us. 'Tis them Onslows has it now. It might be in worse hands, no doubt; but they've no more right to it than you have."

"No right to it—how do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. That if every one had their own, sorrow an acre of that property would be theirs. 'Tis a long story, but if you like to hear it, you're welcome. It's more pleasure than pain to me to tell it; though many a man in my situation wouldn't have the heart to go over it."

Foglass pronounced his willingness at once; and a fresh jorum of punch being concocted, Dalton commenced that narrative of his marriage, widowhood, and loss of fortune, of which the reader already knows the chief particulars, and with whose details we need not twice inflict him.

[illegible] nor was it rendered more suc- [illegible] nor the frequent interruptions to [illegible] suspected him. Shall we own, too, [illegible] Dalton's memory and [illegible] more and more nebulous as the [illegible] wishing to impugn Dalton's good [illegible] his occasional reflections, his [illegible] his speculations as to the [illegible] was very difficult for a man so [illegible] away anything like a clear [illegible] The strength of the pota- [illegible] the parenthetical interruptions, [illegible] exactly like the high road [illegible] the adjustment of the ear- [illegible] —all contributed, more [illegible] nothing so much as a [illegible]

[illegible] his oath, he couldn't [illegible] the late Mr. God- [illegible] Dalton's late wife. Be- [illegible] he had a vague suspicion [illegible] were cut asunder late in [illegible] he also surmised. But [illegible] —who held the [illegible] be there at that moment re- [illegible]

[illegible] and Chancery suits, danced an [illegible] with the scattered fragments [illegible] dinner parties, in, and [illegible] bailiffs, or hunting *them*— [illegible] abroad, with its mani- [illegible] Foglass was in a state which, [illegible] presented a spectacle of very [illegible]

[illegible] could come to was, that Dalton [illegible] and that now he hadn't a sixpence; that [illegible] was somehow the cause, Count Stephen being not [illegible] and that Kate was living a life of extravagance [illegible] and sister were waging a hard fight with the [illegible] of poverty.

[illegible] &c., says the adage; and the poet tells us an [illegible] that "Those who came to scoff, remained to pray." So in the

resent case, Mr. Foglass, whose mission was to pump Peter Dalton out of every family secret and circumstance, had opened such an unexpected tream of intelligence upon himself, that he was actually carried away in he flood.

"You've been hardly used, Dalton," said he, at last. "I may say, nfamously treated! Not only your fortune taken away, but your children torn from you!"

"Aye, just so." Dalton liked sympathy too well to cavil about his itle to it. "True for you, a harder case than mine you'll not hear of n a summer's day. My elegant fine place, my beautiful domain, the eat of my ancestors—or, if they weren't, they were my wife's, and hat's all the same—and to be sitting here, in a foreign country, hundreds of miles away from home! Oh, dear! oh, dear! but that's a hange!" For an instant the thought overwhelmed him, and he was ilent; then, fixing his eyes on Foglass, he added, in a dreamy soliloquy, "Hundreds of miles away from home, drinking bad brandy, with a deaf hap in a red wig for company!"

"I call yours a case of downright oppression, Dalton," resumed the ther, who fortunately overheard nothing of the last remark. "If you ad been residing in Persia or the Caucasus—even in the Danubian provinces—we'd have made you a case for the Foreign Office. You'd have ad your compensation, Sir. Aye, faith! you'd have had a good round um for the murder of your father—old what's his name? You'd have ad your claim, Sir, for the loss of that fine boy the Austrians have aken from you, Mrs. Dalton's wardrobe, and all that sort of thing. I nust repeat my conviction, you've been grossly—infamously treated!"

"And just to think of my own flesh and blood—Stephen, my nncle!"

"I can't think of him, Sir! I can't bear to think of him!" cried Foglass, with enthusiasm.

"A Count of the Empire!" resumed Dalton; "a Field-Marshal, and something else, with his Maria Theresa!"

"At his age, he might give up those habits," said Foglass, who had converted the Cross of the Empress into a very different relationship.

"And now, there's Kate," said Dalton, who never heard his comment —"there's Kate, my own favourite of them all! thinks no more about us han if we didn't belong to her."

"Living in splendour!" mumbled Foglass. "Boundless extravagance!"

"Just so! Wasting hundreds—flinging the money about like chaff!"

"I saw a ball dress of hers myself, at Madame Fanchone's, that was o cost three thousand francs!"

"Three thousand francs! How am I to bear it at all?" exclaimed Dalton, fiercely. "Will any man tell me how an Irish gentleman, with an embarrassed estate, and in the present times, can meet such extravagance as that? Three thousand francs! and, maybe, for a flimsy rag, that wouldn't stand a shower of rain! Oh, Fogles! you don't know the man that's sitting before you—hale and stout and hearty as he looks—the trials he has gone through, and the troubles he has faced—just for his children. Denying himself every enjoyment in life! (here he sipped his glass)—giving up every little comfort he was used to! (another sip)—all for his family! Look at my coat; feel the wool of it; see my breeches, 'tis like the hide of a bear they are; take notice of my shoes; and there's my purse, with two florins and eight kreutzers in it: and, may I never see glory, if I don't owe a little bill in every shop that will trust me! And for what? Answer me that. For what?"

Although the savage energy with which this question was put would have extorted an answer from the least willing witness, Foglass was unable to reply, and only stared in mute astonishment.

"I'll tell you for what, Fogles," resumed Dalton, with a stroke of his clenched fist upon the table—"I'll tell you for what! To have a son in the Hussars, and a daughter in all the height of fashion and fine life. That's it, Fogles. My boy keeping company with all the first people in Austria, hand and glove with—what's his name?—something like 'Misty' or 'Hazy'—I forget it now—dining, driving, and shooting with them. And my girl, Kate—but sure you know better than myself what style she's keeping! That's the reason I'm what you see me here—pining away in solitude and small means! All for my children' sake!"

"It is highly meritorious. It does you honour, Dalton," said the other, emphatically.

"Well, I hope it does," said he, with a sigh. "But how few know it, after all!"

"And has this same Sir Stafford never taken any steps toward recompensing you? Has there been nothing like an *amende* for the great losses you've sustained?"

"Oh, indeed, to do him justice, he made me a kind of an offer once but you see it was hampered with so many conditions and restrictions and the like, that I rejected it with contempt. 'No!' says I, 'tisn' poverty will ever make me demean the old family! The Daltons won' suffer disgrace from me!'"

"He could have assisted you without such an alternative, Dalton."

"Maybe he could, indeed!" sighed the other.

"I know it well; the man is one of the richest in England—the head f a great bank besides, making thousands every week."

"I often thought of that," said Dalton. "Sure it would cost him ttle just to discount a small thing for me at three months. I'd take are to meet it, of course; and he'd never lose a sixpence by me. Inseed, he'd be gaining; for he'd have the commission, and the discount, nd the interest, and the devil-knows-what besides of law expenses——"

Here he stopped abruptly, for he had unwittingly strayed into another nd very different hypothesis regarding the fate of his bill. However, e pulled up short, tossed off his punch, and said, "I only wish he'd o it!"

"Why not try him, then?—you ought, at least, to give yourself the hance."

"And, if he refused me, I'd have to call him out," said Dalton, ravely; "and just see all the confusion that would lead to. My aughter on a visit there, myself here, and, maybe, obliged to go undreds of miles to meet him, and no end to the expense, taking a riend with me, too. No, no! that would be too selfish entirely."

"What if you were to throw out a hint, when you write to your laughter. Allude to present pressure for money—speak of tenants in rrear—remittances not arrived."

"Oh, faith! there's no need prompting me about these things," said Dalton, with a bitter laugh. "I know them too well already."

"Write a few lines, then; you'll find paper and pens on that table. 've told you that I will send it under my own seal, with the despatches."

Dalton was very little given to letter-writing at any period, but to ncounter the labour at night by candle-light, and after a four hours' arouse, seemed to him quite out of the question. Still, the Embassy eal, whatever that might be, was no common temptation. Perhaps he ancied it to be like one of those portentous appendages which are een attached to royal grants! Who can tell what amount of wax and ibbon his imagination bestowed upon it! Beside this, there was another notive—never again, perhaps, should he be able to write without Nelly's nowledge. This consideration decided the question at once. Accordngly he put on his spectacles, and seated himself gravely to the work, vhich proceeded thus:—

"Dear Kate,—

"I'm spending the evening with your friend the Ambassador of ——, I forget where—Fogles is his name—and as pleasant a man as I ever net; and he sends his regards to you and all the family, and transmits his under his own seal. Things is going on bad enough here. Not a shilling out of Crognoborraghan. Healey ran away with the Novem-

ber rent and the crops, and Sweeney's got into the place, and won't give it up to any one without he gets forty pound! I'd give him forty of my teeth as soon, if I had them! Ryan shot Mr. Johnson coming home from work, and will be hanged on Saturday; and that's in our favour, as he was a life in Honan's lease. There's no money in Ireland, Kellet tells me, and there's none here. Where the blazes is it all gone to? Maybe, like the potatoes, 'tis dying out!

"Frank's well sick of soldiering; they chained him up like a dog, with his hand to his leg, the other night for going to the play; and if he wasn't a born gentleman, he says, they'd have given him 'four-and-twenty,' as he calls it, with a stick for impudence. Stephen's no more good to him than an old umbrella—never gave him bit nor sup! Bad luck to the old Neygur—I can't speak of him.

"Nelly goes on carving and cutting away as before. There's not a Saint in the calendar she didn't make out of rotten wood this winter, and little Hans buys them all, at a fair price, she says; but I call a Holy Family cheap at ten florins, and 'tis giving the Virgin away to sell her for a Prussian dollar. 'Tis a nice way for one of the Daltons to be living—by her own industry!

"I often wish for you back here; but I'd be sorry, after all, ye'd come, for the place is poorer than ever, and you're in good quarters, and snug where you are.

"Tell me how they treat you—if they're as kind as before—and how is the old man, and is the gout bad with him still. I send you in this a little bill Martin Cox, of Drumsnagh, inclosed me for sixty-two ten-and-eight—could you get the old Baronet to put his name on it for me; tell him 'tis as good as the bank paper, that Cox is as respectable a man as any in Leitrim, and an estated gentleman, like myself, and of course that we'll take care to have the cash ready for it when due. This will be a great convenience to me, and Fogles says it will be a pleasure to Sir Stafford, besides extending his connexion among Irish gentlemen. If he seems to like the notion, say that your father is well known in Ireland, and can help him to a very lively business in the same way. Indeed, I'd have been a fortune to him myself, alone, if he had the discounting of me for the last fifteen years!

"Never mind this, however, for bragging is not genteel; but get me his name, and send me the 'bit of stiff' by return of post.

"If he wants to be civil, maybe, he'll put it into the bank himself, and send me the money; and if so, let the order be on Haller and Oelcher, for I've a long account with Koch and Elz, and maybe they'd keep a grip of the cash, and I'd just be where I was before.

"If I can get out of this next spring it would be a great economy, for I owe something to everybody, and a new place always gives courage.

Genoa or New York, but cheap-
... for my family.
...believe me your fond father,
"PETER DALTON.
... have my own acceptance, let him draw
... and I'm ready; but don't disappoint me,
...fifteen florins a 'klafter' here, now, and I've
...mes home, as Andy took a slice out of his
... the hatchet, and is in bed ever since. Vege-
... since Frank went, we never see a bit of game.
... had such a thing as a warm winter cloak that you
...might send it to Nelly. She goes out in a thing like ...
...er, and the wooden shoes is mighty unhandy with her

... the bill."

... are writing a rather lengthy despatch, Dalton," said Foglass. ... had twice dozed off to sleep, and woke again, only to see him still occupied with his epistle.

"It's done now," said Dalton, with a sigh; for, without well knowing why, he was not quite satisfied with the performance.

"I wish you'd just add a line, to say that Mrs. Ricketts—Mrs. Major-General Ricketts, who resides at Florence, is so desirous to know her. You can mention that she is one of the first people, but so exclusive about acquaintance, that it is almost impossible to get presented to her, but that this coming winter the Embassy will, in all likelihood, open a door to so very desirable an object.

"Lady Hester will know her, of course?" said Dalton, whose sense of proprieties was usually clear enough when selfishness did not interfere, "and I don't see that my daughter should extend her acquaintance through any other channel."

"Oh, very true; it's of no consequence. I only meant it as an attention to Miss Dalton; but your observation is very just," said Foglass, who suddenly felt that he was on dangerous ground.

"Depend upon't, Fogles, my daughter is in the best society of the place, whatever it is. It's not a Dalton would be left out."

Foglass repeated his most implicit conviction in this belief, and did all in his power to efface the memory of the suggestion; but without success. Family pride was a kind of birdlime with old Dalton, and if he but touched, he could not leave it. The consequences, however, went no further than a long and intricate dissertation on the Dalton blood for

several centuries back, through which Fogles slept just as soundly as the respected individuals there recorded, and was only awoke at last by Dalton rising to take leave—an event at last suggested by the empty decanter.

"And now, Fogles," said he, summing up, "you'll not wonder, that if we're poor we're proud. I suppose you never heard of a better stock than that since you were born?"

"Never, by Jove! Guelphs, Ghibellines, and Hapsburghs, are nothing to them. Good night—good night. I'll take care of your letter. It shall go to-morrow, in the Embassy-bag."

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN INVASION.

To afford the reader the explanation contained in the preceding chapter, we have been obliged to leave Kate Dalton waiting, in mingled anxiety and suspense, for the hour of Mrs. Ricketts' visit. Although her mind principally dwelt upon the letter which had been announced as coming from her father—an event so strange as naturally to cause astonishment—she also occasionally recurred to the awkwardness of receiving persons whom Lady Hester had so scrupulously avoided, and being involved in an acquaintanceship so unequivocally pronounced vulgar. A few short months before, and the incident would have worn a very different aspect to her eyes. She would have dwelt alone on the kindness of one, an utter stranger, addressing her in terms of respectful civility, and proffering the intention of a visit. She would have been grateful for the good-nature that took charge of a communication for her. She would have viewed the whole as a sort of flattering notice, and never dreamed of that long catalogue of "inconveniences" and annoyances, so prolifically associated with the event as it at present stood. She was greatly changed in many respects. She had been daily accustomed to hear the most outrageous moral derelictions lightly treated, or at least but slightly censured. For every fault and failing there was a skilful excuse or a charitable explanation. The errors of the fashionable world were shown to be few, insignificant, and venial; and the code showed no exception to the rule that "well-bred people can do no wrong;" vulgarity alone was criminal; and the sins of the underbred admitted of no palliation. Her sense of justice might have revolted against such judgments, had reason been ever appealed to; but

such was not the case. Ridicule alone was the arbiter: whatever could be scoffed at was detestable; and a solecism in dress, accent, or demeanour, were higher crimes than many a grave transgression or glaring iniquity.

The little mimicries of Albert Jekyl, as he described Mrs. Ricketts—the few depreciatory remarks of Lady Hester concerning her—would have outweighed her worth had her character been a cornucopia of goodness. It was, then, in no pleasant flurry of spirits that, just as the clock struck three, Kate heard the heavy door of the Palace flung wide, and the sound of wheels echo beneath the vaulted entrance. The next moment, a small one-horse phaeton, driven by a very meagre servant in a tawdry livery, passed into the court-yard, having deposited its company in the hall.

There had been a time, and that not so very far back, neither, when the sight of that humble equipage, with visitors, would have made her heart beat to the full as strong, albeit with very different emotions. Now, however, she actually glanced at the windows to see if it had attracted notice, with a kind of terror at the ridicule it would excite. Never did she think an old grey horse could be so ugly—never did wheels make so intolerable a noise before! Why would people dress up their servants like harlequins?—what was the meaning of that leopard-skin rug for the feet? It was an odious little vehicle altogether. There was a tawdry, smirking, self-satisfied pretension about its poverty, that made one wish for a break down on looking at it!

"Mrs. Montague Ricketts and Miss Ricketts," said a very demure-looking Groom of the Chambers; and although his features were immaculate in their expression of respect, Kate felt offended at what she thought was a flippancy in the man's manner.

Although the announcement was thus made, the high and mighty personages were still three rooms off, and visible only in the dim distance, coming slowly forward.

Leaning on her sister's arm, and with a step at once graceful and commanding, Mrs. Ricketts came on. At least, so Kate judged an enormous pyramid of crimson velvet and ermine to be, from the summit of which waved a sufficiency of plumes for a moderate hearse. The size and dignity of this imposing figure almost entirely eclipsed poor Martha, and completely shut out the slender proportions of Mr. Scroope Purvis, who, from being loaded like a sumpter-mule with various articles for the road, was passed over by the Groom of the Chambers, and believed to be a servant. Slow as was the order of march, Purvis made it still slower, by momentarily dropping some of the articles with which

he was charged; and as they comprised a footstool, a poodle, two parasols, an album, a smelling-bottle, a lorgnette, with various cushions, shawls, and a portable firescreen, his difficulties may be rather compassionated than censured.

"Scroope, how can you? Martha, do speak to him. It's down again. He'll smash my lorgnette,—he'll smother Fidèle. How very awkward—how absurd we shall look!" Such were the *sotto voce* accompaniments that filled up the intervals till they arrived at the great drawing-room, where Kate Dalton sat.

If the reader has ever watched a great tragedy queen emerging from the flats, when, after a lively dialogue with the prompter, and the utterance of a pleasant jest, she issues forth upon the open stage, to vent the sorrows or the wrongs of injured womanhood, he may form some faint idea of the rapid transformation that Mrs. Ricketts underwent as she passed the door-sill. Her first movement was a sudden bound forwards, or, at least, such an approach to a spring as a body so imposing could accomplish, and then, throwing her arms wide, she seemed as if about to enclose Miss Dalton in a fast embrace; and so, doubtless, had she done, if Kate had responded to the sign. A deep, and very formal curtsey was, however, her only acknowledgment of this spontaneous burst of feeling, and Mrs. Ricketts, like a skilful General, at once changing her plan of attack, converted her ardour into astonishment, and exclaimed,

"Did you ever see such a resemblance! Could you believe it possible, Martha? A thousand apologies, my dear Miss Dalton, for this rudeness; but you are so wonderfully like our dear, dear friend, Lady Caroline Montressor, that I actually forgot myself. Pray forgive me, and let me present my sister, Miss Ricketts. My brother, Mr. Scroope Purvis, Miss Dalton."

The ceremonial of introduction over, and Mrs. Ricketts being at last seated—a very tedious operation, in which the arrangement of cushions, pillows, and footstools, played a conspicuous part—that bland lady began, in her very softest of voices:

"This, indeed, repays me—amply, fully repays me!—eh, Martha?"

"Quite so, sister," responded Martha, in a meek whisper.

"A poor invalid as I am, rarely rising from a sofa except to snatch the perfumed odours of a violet in spring, or to listen to the murmurs of a rippling fountain; denied all the excitements of society by a nervous temperament, so finely strung as to be jarred by contact, even the remotest, with inferior souls—think of what ecstasy a moment like this afford——"

As Kate was profoundly ignorant to what happy combination of circumstances this blissful state could be attributed, she could only smile courteously, and mutter some vague expressions of her pleasure, satisfaction, and so forth.

"Eve in her own paradise!" exclaimed Mrs. Ricketts, as she turned her eyes from Kate to the gorgeous chamber in which they were seated. "May I ask if the taste of these decorations be yours, Miss Dalton?"

"Lady Hester Onslow's, Madam," said Kate, quietly.

"I declare, I like these hangings better than 'Gobelins'—they are lighter, and more graceful. You remember, Martha, I told the dear Queen of Saxony that blue velvet would go so well with her small pictures. We discussed the point every morning at breakfast for a week, and the poor dear King at last called us the 'blue devils;'—very happy, wasn't it, Miss Dalton? But he speaks English just like one of ourselves."

"These are all Dutch pictures, I perceive," said Purvis, who, with his poodle under his arm, was making a tour of the room, peering into everything, opening books, prying into china jars, and spying into work-boxes, as though in search of some missing article.

"I'm tired of Wou—Wou—Wou——" Here the poodle barked, doubtless in the belief that he was responding to an invitation. "Down, Fidèle! Wou—vermans," gulped out Purvis. "He's always the same."

"But those dear white palfreys, how I love them! I always have a white horse, out of regard for Wouvermans."

Kate thought of the poor grey in the court-yard, and said nothing.

"And there is something so touching—so exquisitely touching—in those Flemish interiors, where the good wife is seated reading, and a straggling sunbeam comes slanting in upon the tiled floor. Little peeps of life, as it were, in a class of which we know nothing; for really, Miss Dalton, in our order, sympathies are too much fettered; and I often think it would be better that we knew more of the middle classes! When I say this, of course I do not mean as associates—far less as intimates—but as ingredients in the grand scheme of universal nature."

"'The no—no—noblest study of man—mankind is'—what is it, sister?"

"'Man,' Scroope; but the poet intended to refer to the great aims and objects of our being. Don't you think so, Miss Dalton? It was not man in the little cares of every-day life, in his social relations, but man in his destinies, in his vast future, when he goes beyond 'that bourne——'"

"From which nobody ever got out again," cackled Purvis, in an ecstasy at the readiness of his quotation.

"Here it is, Scroope. I've found it."

"No, that's a toe," said he; "there's a nail to it."

"I am getting ill—I shall faint," said Mrs. Ricketts, retiring upon a well-cushioned sofa from the calamity.

Martha now flew to the bell-rope and pulled it violently, while Purvis threw open the window, and with such rash haste as to upset a stand of camelias, thereby scattering plants, buds, earth, and crockery over the floor, while poor Kate, thunderstruck at the avalanche of ruin around her, leaned against the wall for support, unable to stir or even speak. As Martha continued to tug away at the bell, the alarm, suggesting the idea of fire, brought three or four servants to the door together.

"Madeira! quick, Madeira!" cried Martha, as she unloosed various articles of dress from her sister's throat, and prepared a plan of operations for resuscitation that showed at least an experienced hand.

"Bring wine," said Kate, faintly, to the astonished Butler, who, not noticing Miss Ricketts' order, seemed to await hers.

"Madeira! it must be Madeira!" cried Martha, mildly.

"She don't dislike Mar—Mar—Marco-brunner," whispered Purvis to the servant, "and I'll take a glass too."

Had the irruption been one of veritable housebreakers, had the occasion been what newspapers stereotype as a "Daring Burglary," Kate Dalton might, in all likelihood, have distinguished herself as a heroine. She would, it is more than probable, have evinced no deficiency either of courage or presence of mind, but in the actual contingency nothing could be more utterly helpless than she proved; and, as she glided into a chair, her pale face and trembling features betrayed more decisive signs of suffering than the massive countenance which Martha was now deluging with eau de cologne and lavender.

The wine soon made its appearance—a very imposing array of restoratives—the ambulatory pharmacopœia of the Ricketts' family, was all displayed upon a table. Martha, divested of shawl, bonnet, and gloves, stood ready for action; and thus, everything being in readiness, Mrs. Ricketts, whose consideration never suffered her to take people unawares, now began her nervous attack in all form.

If ague—hysterics—recovery from drowning—tic-douloreux, and an extensive burn, had all sent representatives of their peculiar agonies, with injunctions to struggle for a mastery of expression, the symptoms could scarcely have equalled those now exhibited. There was not a contortion nor convulsion that her countenance did not undergo, while the devil's tattoo kept up by her heels upon the floor, and her knuckles occasionally on the table, and now and then on Scroope's head, added

ly to the effect of her screams, which varied from the deep groan
melodrame to the wildest shrieks of tragedy.
here's no danger, Miss Dalton," whispered Martha, whose functions
d-rubbing, temple-bathing, wine-giving, and so forth, were per-
l with a most jog-trot regularity.
'hen she sc—sc—screams, she's all right," added Purvis; and,
ly, the most anxious friend might have been comforted on the
t occasion.
ıall I not send for a Physician?" asked Kate, eagerly.
ı no account, Miss Dalton. We are quite accustomed to these
s. My dear sister's nerves are so susceptible."
e," said Scroope, who, be it remarked, had already half finished a
of hock, "poor Zoe is all sensibility—the scabbard too sharp for
ord. Won't you have a glass of wine, Miss Dalton?"
ıanks, Sir, I take none. I trust she is better now—she looks
•
e is better; but this is the difficult moment," whispered Martha.
shock—any sudden impression now, might prove fatal."
hat is to be done, then?" said Kate, in terror.
e must be put to bed at once, the room darkened, and the strictest
preserved. Can you spare your room?"
, of course, anything—everything at such a moment," cried
rified girl, whose reason was now completely mastered by her

e must be carried. Will you give orders, Miss Dalton; and
, step down to the carriage, and bring up——" Here Miss Ricketts'
degenerated into an inaudible whisper; but Scroope left the room
the command.
sympathy for suffering had so thoroughly occupied Kate, that all
n of unpleasant consequences that were to follow this unhappy
t had never once occurred to her; nor did a thought of Lady
cross her mind, 'till, suddenly, the whole flashed upon her, by the
nce of her maid Nina in the drawing-room.
your own room, Mademoiselle?" asked she, with a look that said
e than any words.
, Nina," whispered she. "What can I do? She is so ill! They
it may be dangerous, at any moment, and——"
sh, my dear Miss Dalton!" said Martha; "one word may wake

be a butterfly!" warbled the sick lady, in a low, weak treble;
smile of angelic beatitude beamed on her features.

"Hush! be still!" said Martha, motioning the surrounders to silence.

"What shall I do, Nina? Shall I go and speak to my Lady?" asked Kate.

A significant shrug of the shoulders, more negative than affirmative, was the only answer.

"I'd be a gossamer, and you'd be the King of Thebes," said Mrs. Ricketts, addressing a tall footman, who stood ready to assist in carrying her.

"Yes, Madam," said he, respectfully.

"She's worse," whispered Martha, gravely.

"And we'll walk on the wall of China by moonlight, with Cleopatra and Mr. Cobden."

"Certainly, Madam," said the man, who felt the question too direct for evasion.

"Has she been working slippers for the planet Ju—Ju—Jupiter, yet?" asked Purvis, eagerly, as he entered the room, heated and flushed from the weight of a portentous bag of coloured wool.

"No; not yet," whispered Martha. "You may lift her now, gently—very gently, and not a word."

And in strict obedience, the servants raised their fair burden, and bore her from the room, after Nina, who led the way with an air that betokened a more than common indifference to human suffering.

"When she gets at Ju—Jupiter," said Purvis to Kate, as they closed the procession, "it's a bad symptom; or when she fancies she's Hec—Hec—Hec—Hec——"

"Hecate?"

"No; not Hec—Hecate, but Hecuba—Hecuba; then it's a month, at least, before she comes round."

"How dreadful!" cried Kate. And certainly there was not a grain of hypocrisy in the fervour with which she uttered it.

"I don't think she'll go beyond the San—Sandwich Islands this time, however," added he, consolingly.

"Hush, Scroope!" cried Martha. And now they entered the small and exquisitely furnished dressing-room which was appropriated to Kate's use; within which, and opening upon a small orangery, stood her bedroom.

Nina, who scrupulously obeyed every order of her young mistress, continued the while to exhibit a hundred petty signs of mute rebellion.

"Lady Hester wishes to see Miss Dalton," said a servant at the outer door.

"Can you permit me for a moment?" asked Kate, in a tremor.

"Oh, of course, my dear Miss Dalton; let there be no ceremony with us," said Martha. "Your kindness makes us feel like old friends already."

"I feel myself quite at home," cried Scroope, whose head was not proof against so much wine; and then, turning to one of the servants, he added a mild request for the two bottles that were left on the drawing-room table.

Martha happily, however, overheard and revoked the order. And now the various attendants withdrew, leaving the family to themselves.

It was in no pleasant mood that Kate took her way towards Lady Hester's apartment. The drawing-room, as she passed through it, still exhibited some of the signs of its recent ruin, and the servants were busied in collecting fragments of porcelain and flower-pots. Their murmured comments, hushed as she went by, told her how the occurrence was already the gossip of the household. It was impossible for her not to connect herself with the whole misfortune. But for her!—— But she could not endure the thought, and it was with deep humiliation and trembling in every limb that she entered Lady Hester's chamber.

"Leave me, Celadon; I want to speak to Miss Dalton," said Lady Hester to the Hairdresser, who had just completed one-half of her Ladyship's *chevelure*, leaving the other side pinned and rolled up in those various preparatory stages, which have more of promise than picturesque about them. Her cheek was flushed, and her eyes sparkled with an animation that betrayed more passion than pleasure.

"What is this dreadful story I've heard, child, and that the house is full of? Is it possible there can be any truth in it? Have these odious people actually dared to establish themselves here? Tell me, child—speak!"

"Mrs. Ricketts became suddenly ill," said Kate, trembling; "her dog threw down a china jar."

"Not my Sevres jar?—-not the large green one, with the figures?"

"I grieve to say it was!"

"Go on. What then?" said Lady Hester, dryly.

"Shocked at the incident, and alarmed, besides, by the fall of a flower-stand, she fainted away, and subsequently was seized with what I supposed to be a convulsive attack, but to which her friends seemed perfectly accustomed, and pronounced not dangerous. In this dilemma they asked me if they might occupy my room. Of course I could not refuse, and yet felt, the while, that I had no right to extend the hospitality of this house.

I saw the indelicacy of what I was doing. I was shocked and ashamed, and yet——"

"Go on," said Lady Hester once more, and with a stern quietude of manner that Kate felt more acutely than even an angry burst of temper.

"I have little more to say; in fact, I know not what I am saying," cried she, gulping to repress the torrent of suffering that was struggling within her.

"Miss Dalton," began Lady Hester——

"Oh! why not Kate?" broke she in with a choking utterance.

"Miss Dalton," resumed Lady Hester, and as if not hearing the entreaty, "very little knowledge of that world you have lived in for the past three or four months might have taught you some slight self-possession in difficulty. Still less acquaintance with it might have suggested the recollection that these people are no intimates of mine; so that, even were tact wanting, feeling, at least, should have dictated a line of action to you."

"I know I have done wrong. I knew it at the time, and yet, in my inexperience, I could not decide on anything. My memory, too, helped to mislead me, for I bethought me, that although these persons were not of your own rank and station, that yet you had stooped lower than them when you came to visit Nelly and myself."

"Humph!" ejaculated Lady Hester, and with a gesture that very unequivocally seemed to say, that her having done so was a grievous error. Kate saw it quickly, and as suddenly the blood rushed to her cheek, colouring her throat and neck with the deep crimson of shame. A burst of pride—the old Dalton pride—seemed to have given way within her; and, as she drew herself up to her full height, her look and attitude wore every sign of haughty indignation.

Lady Hester looked at her for a few seconds, with a glance of searching import. Perhaps, for a moment, the possibility of a deception struck her, and that this might only be feigned; but as suddenly did she recognise the unerring traits of truth, and said,

"What! child, are you angry with *me*?"

"Oh, no, no," said Kate, bursting into tears, and kissing the hand that was now extended towards her—"Oh, no, no! but I could hate myself for what seems so like ingratitude."

"Come, sit down here at my feet, on this stool, and tell me all about it; for, after all, I could forgive them the jar and the camelias, if they'd only have gone away afterwards. And of course the lesson will not be thrown away upon you—not to be easily deceived again."

"How, deceived!" exclaimed Kate. "She was very ill. I saw it myself."

"Nonsense, child. The trick is the very stalest piece of roguery going. Since Toe Morris, as they call him—the man that treads upon people, and by his apologies scrapes acquaintance with them—there is nothing less original. Why, just before we left England, there was old Bankhead got into Slingsby House, merely because the newspapers might announce his death at the Earl of Grindleton's—'On the eighth, of a few days' illness, deeply regretted by the Noble Lord, with whom he was on a visit.' Now, that dear Ricketts woman would almost consent to take leave of the world for a similar paragraph. I'm sure I should know nothing of such people, but that Sir Stafford's relations have somewhat enlightened me. He has a nest of cousins down in Shropshire, not a whit better than your—I was going to call them 'your friends,' the Ricketts."

"It is almost incredible to suppose this could be artifice."

"Why so, child? There is no strategy too deep for people who are always aspiring to some society above them. Besides, after all, I was in a measure prepared for this."

"Prepared for it!"

"Yes; Jekyl told me, that if they once got in, it would be next to impossible to keep them out, afterwards. A compromise, he said, was the best thing; to let them have so many days each year, with certain small privileges about showing the house to strangers, cutting bouquets, and so on; or, if we preferred it, let them carry away a Teniers or a Gerard Dow to copy, and take care never to ask for it. He inclined to the latter as the better plan, because, after a certain lapse of time, it can end in a cut."

"But this is inconceivable!" exclaimed Kate.

"And yet, half the absurd and incongruous intimacies one sees in the world, have had some such origin; and habit will reconcile one to acquaintance that at first inspired feelings of abhorrence and detestation. I'm sure I don't know one good house in town where there are not certain intimates that have not the slightest pretension, either from rank, wealth, distinction, or social qualities, to be there. And yet, there they are; not merely as supernumeraries, either, but very prominent and foreground figures, giving advice, and offering counsel on questions of family policy, and writing their vulgar names on every will, codicil, marriage-settlement, and trust-deed, 'till they seem to be part of the genealogical tree, to which, after all, they are only attached like fungi. You look very unhappy, my poor Kate, at all this; but, believe me, the

system will outlive both of us. And so, now to your room, and dress for dinner. But I forget; you hav'n't got a room; so Celestine must give you hers, and you will be close beside me, and we shall be the better able to concert measures about these Ricketts folk, who really resemble those amiable peasants your father told me of, on his Irish property, and whom he designated as 'Squatters.' I'm delighted that I hav'n't forgot the word."

And thus, chatting on, Lady Hester restored Kate's wonted happiness of nature, sadly shaken as it had been by the contrarieties of the morning. Nothing, too, was easier than to make her forget a source of irritation. Ever better satisfied to look on the bright side of life, her inclinations needed but little aid from conviction to turn her from gloomy themes to pleasant ones; and already some of the absurdities of the morning were recurring to her mind, and little traits of Mrs. Ricketts and her brother were involuntarily coming up through all the whirlpool of annoyance and confusion in which they had been submerged.

The coming dinner, too, engrossed some share of her thoughts; for it was a grand entertainment, to which all Lady Hester's most distinguished friends were invited. An Archduke and a Cardinal were to make part of the company, and Kate looked forward to meeting these great personages with no common interest. It was less the vulgar curiosity of observing the manners and bearing of distinguished characters, than the delight she felt in following out some child-invented narrative of her future life—some fancied story of her own career, wherein Princes and Prelates were to figure, and scenes of splendour and enjoyment to follow each other in rapid succession.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CONCLUSION OF A "GRAND DINNER."

LADY HESTER's dinner of that day was a "grand one,"—that is to say, it was one of those great displays which from time to time are offered up as sacrifices to the opinion of the world. Few of her own peculiar set were present. Some, she omitted herself; others, had begged off of their own accord. Midchikoff, however, was there; for, however accustomed to the tone and habits of a life of mere dissipation, he possessed every requirement for mixing with general society. It was true he was not fond of meeting "Royal Highnesses," before whom his own equivocal rank sank into insignificance; nor did he love "Cardinals," whose haughty pretensions always overtopped every other nobility. To oblige Lady Hester, however, he did come, and condescended, for "the nonce," to assume his most amiable of moods. The Marchesa Guardoni, an old coquette of the days of the French Empire, but now a rigid devotee, and a most exclusive moralist; a few elderly diplomates, of a quiet and cat-like smoothness of manner; with certain notabilities of the Court, made up the party. There were no English whatever; Jekyl, who made out the list, well knowing that Florence offered none of a rank sufficiently distinguished, except Norwood, whose temporary absence from the city was rather a boon than the reverse; for the noble Viscount, when not "slang," was usually silent, and, by long intercourse with the turf and its followers, had ceased to feel any interest in topics which could not end in a wager.

The entertainment was very splendid. Nothing was wanting which luxury or taste could contribute. The wines were delicious; the cookery perfect. The guests were courteous and pleasing; but all was of the quietest. None of the witty sallies, the piquant anecdotes, the brilliant repartees, which usually pattered like hail around that board. Still less were heard those little histories of private life where delinquencies furnish all the interest. The royal guest imposed a reserve which the presence of the Cardinal deepened. The conversation, like the *cuisine*, was flavoured for fine palates: both were light, suggestive, and of easy digestion. Events were discussed rather than the actors in them. All was ease and simplicity; but it was a stately kind of simplicity, which served to chill those that were unaccustomed to it. So Kate Dalton felt it; and, however sad the confession, we must own that she greatly pre-

ferred the free and easy tone of Lady Hester's midnight receptions to the colder solemnity of these distinguished guests.

Even to the Cardinal's whist-table, everything wore a look of state and solemnity. The players laid down their cards with a measured gravity, and scored their honours with the air of men discharging a high and important function. As for the Archduke, he sat upon a sofa beside Lady Hester, suffering himself to be amused by the resources of her small talk, bowing blandly at times, occasionally condescending to a smile, but rarely uttering even a monosyllable. Even that little social warmth that was kindled by the dinner-table seemed to have been chilled by the drawing-room, where the conversation was maintained in a low, soft tone, that never rose above a murmur. It may be, perhaps, some sort of consolation to little folk to think that Princes are generally sad looking. The impassable barrier of reserve around them, if it protect from all the rubs and frictions of life, equally excludes from much of its genial enjoyment; and all those little pleasantries which grow out of intimacy are denied those who have no equals.

It was in some such meditation as this Kate Dalton sat, roused occasionally to bestow a smile or a passing word of acknowledgment in return for some of those little morsels of compliment and flattery which old courtiers pay as their rightful tribute to a young and handsome woman. She was sufficiently accustomed to this kind of homage to accept it without losing, even for an instant, any train of thought her mind was pursuing. Nor did the entrance of any new guest, a number of whom had been invited for the evening, distract her from her half reverie.

The *salons*, without being crowded, now showed a numerous company, all of whom exhibited in their demeanour that respectful reserve the presence of Royalty ever inspires. It seemed, indeed, as though all the conversation that went forward was like a mere "aside" to that more important dialogue which was maintained beside the Prince.

A slow but measured tide of persons passed before him, bowing with respectful deference as they went. With some he deigned to speak a few words, others had a smile, or a little nod of recognition, and some again one of those cold and vacant stares with which great people are occasionally wont to regard little ones. His Royal Highness was not one of those accomplished princes whose pride it is to know the name, the family, the pursuits, and predilections of each new *presentée;* on the contrary, he was absent, and forgetful to a degree scarcely credible; his want of memory betraying him into innumerable mistakes, from which, even had he known, no adroitness of his own could have extricated him. On this evening he had not been peculiarly fortunate; he had complimented a minister who had just received his recal in disgrace

—he had felicitated a young lady on her approaching marriage, which had been broken off; while the burden of his talk to Lady Hester was in disparagement of those foreigners who brought a scandal upon his court by habits and manners which would not be tolerated in their own countries. Divorce, or even separation, met his heavy reprobation; and while his code of morality, on the whole, exhibited very merciful dispositions, he bestowed unmitigated severity upon all that could shock the world's opinion.

To this Lady Hester had to listen as best she might—a task not the less trying and difficult from the ill-suppressed looks of malice and enjoyment she saw on every side. From all these causes put together, the occasion, however flattering to her vanity, was far from being pleasurable to her feelings, and she longed for it to be over. The Prince looked wearied enough, but somehow there is nothing like royalty for endurance; their whole lives would seem to teach the lesson, and so he sat on, saying a stray word, bowing with half-closed lids, and looking as though very little more would set him fast asleep.

It was the very culminating point of the whole evening's austerity; one of those little pauses which now and then occur had succeeded to the murmur of conversation. The whist party had been broken up, and the Cardinal was slowly advancing up the room, the company, even to the ladies, rising respectfully as he passed, when the folding-doors were thrown wide, and a servant announced Mr. Scroope Purvis.

If the name was unknown to the assembled guests, there was one there at least who heard it with a sensation of actual terror, and poor Kate Dalton sank back into her chair with a kind of instinctive effort at concealment. By this time the door had closed behind him, leaving Mr. Purvis standing with an expression of no small bewilderment at the gorgeous assembly into which he had intruded.

Lady Hester's quick ear had caught the name, even from the furthest end of the room, but, while she attributed it to the mispronunciations of which foreign servants are so liberal, looked out with some curiosity for him who owned it.

Nor had she to look long, for, his first moment of surprise over, Purvis put up his double eye-glass and commenced a tour of the rooms, in that peculiarly scrutinising way for which he was distinguished. The fact that all the faces were unknown to him seemed to impart additional courage to his investigations, for he stared about with as little concern as he might have done in a theatre.

Most men in his situation would have been egoist enough to have thought only of themselves, and the awkwardness of their own position. Purvis, on the contrary, had an eye for everything; from the chande-

liers on the walls to the crosses on the dress-coats—from the decorations of the *salons* to the diamonds—he missed nothing; and with such impartial fairness did he bestow his glances, that the Cardinal's cheeks grew red as his own stockings, as Scroope surveyed him. At last he reached the end of the great drawing-room, and found himself standing directly in front of the canopied seat, where the Archduke sat with Lady Hester. Not heeding, if he even remarked, the little circle which etiquette had drawn in front of the Prince, Purvis advanced within the charmed precincts, and stared steadily at the Duke.

"I perceive that one of your friends is most anxious to pay his respects to you, Lady Hester," said the Prince, with a very peculiar smile.

"I beg to assure you, Sir, that the gentleman is unknown to me; his presence here is an honour for which I am totally unprepared."

"My name is Purvis, Madam—Sc—Sc—Scroope Purvis. Miss Dalton knows me; and my sister, is Mrs. Ricketts."

"You will find Miss Dalton yonder, Sir," said Lady Hester, all whose efforts were barely sufficient to restrain her temper.

"I see her," cried Purvis, putting his glass up; "but she's trying to escape me. She's got a man with a re—re—red beard before her, but it won't do—I'm too sh—sh—sharp for that."

The Archduke laughed, and heartily too, at this sally; and Purvis, emboldened by the complaisance, edged more closely towards him to point out the lady in question. "She has a droll kind of sc—sc—scarf in her hair; there, don't you see her now! Have you ever seen the pictures in the Pitti Palace?"

The question was a little startling, as the personage to whom it was addressed had his residence there. The Archduke, however, merely bowed in acquiescence, and Purvis went on: "My sister Zoe copied one—and I like it better than the Ti—Tit—Titian itself. We smoked it, too, and made it look so brown, you'd never guess it to be mo—mo—mo—modern."

To judge from the bewildered look of the Duke, the whole of this speech was pure Chaldee to him; and when he turned to Lady Hester for an explanation, he discovered that she had left her seat. Whether mistaking the motion as an invitation to be seated, or merely acting by his own impulses, Scroope crossed over and sat down on the sofa with a degree of self-satisfaction that lighted up all his features.

"You're not one of the fa—family, are you?" asked he.

"I have not that honour," said the Prince, with a bow.

"I thought not. I suspected that there was a tw—tw—twang in your English that looked foreign, but I know your face quite well."

The Duke bowed again.

"Pretty rooms these," said Purvis, with his glass to his eye; "what a d—d—deal of money they must have cost. They're going it fast, these Onslows."

"Indeed," said the Prince, who only half understood the remark.

"I know it," said Scroope, with a confidential wink. "Their butcher se—se—serves us, and he won't give anything till they have sent their orders; and as for wine, they drink Bordeaux in the servants' hall. I don't know what *you* have, but a d—d—deuced sight better than ever *I* get."

"Good wine, however, can be had here, I hope," said the Duke, blandly.

"Yes, if you sm—sm—smuggle it," said Scroope, with a knowing cackle; while, to add poignancy to the remark, he nudged the Prince with his elbow. "That's the only way to have it. The st—stupid government sees nothing."

"Is that the case, Sir?" asked the Prince, with a degree of interest he had not manifested before.

"To be sure it is. My sister Zoe never pays duty on anything, and if you like your c—c—cigars cheap, just t—t—tell me, that's all. The G—G—Grand Duke never got a sixpence of my money yet, and if I kn—know myself, he never shall."

"Do you bear him any grudge, Sir, that you say this so emphatically?"

"No—not at all. They tell me that he's good-hearted, although somewhat we—weak in the a—a—attic story;" and here Scroope tapped his forehead significantly—"but that's in the family. My sister Zoe could tell you such st—stories about them, you'd die laughing; and then there's Jekyl takes them off so well! It's c—c—capital fun. He gives a dia—dia—dialogue between the Grand Duke and the Pope's Nuncio, that's better than a farce."

How far Mr. Purvis might have been carried in his zeal to be agreeable there is no saying, when Lady Hester came up with Kate leaning on her arm.

"This gentleman claims acquaintance with you, Miss Dalton," said she, haughtily.

"Oh, to be sure—she knows me; and I have a letter for her, from her—her fa—father," said Purvis, drawing forth a packet like a postman's.

"Miss Dalton would prefer being seated, Sir," said Lady Hester, while she motioned towards another part of the room.

"Yes, yes, of course, we'll find out a snug co—corner somewhere for a chat; just take my arm, will you? Let us get away from all these great 'Dons,' with their stars and crosses." And, without waiting for

Kate's reply, he drew her arm within his own, and set out in that little shuffling trot which he always assumed when he fancied he had business on hand.

The ridicule of being associated with such a companion would at any other moment have overwhelmed Kate Dalton with shame, but now, whether from the few words which Lady Hester had whispered in her ear, whether the fact of his unauthorised appearance, or whether it were the dread of some greater disgrace to follow, she actually felt a sense of relief in the continuous flow of twaddle which he kept up as they passed down the room.

"Who was that smiled as we passed?" asked he.

"Prince Midchikoff."

"Oh, that was he, was it? You must introduce me."

"Not now; pray, not now; at any other time," cried she, in perfect terror.

"Well, but don't forget it. Zoe would never forgive me, if I told her that I lost the op—op—opportunity; she wants to know him so very much."

"Of course, at another time," said Kate, hurrying him along with increasing speed.

"Who's he?" asked Purvis, as a tall and stately personage bowed blandly to Kate.

"The Austrian Minister."

"Not the fellow that st—st—strangled the Emperor? Oh, I forgot; he was a Russian, wasn't he? They got him down, and ch—ch—choked him; ha! ha! ha! There's a man with a red moustache, so like the fellow who sells the bou—bou—'bouquets' at the Cascini."

"A Hungarian Magnate," whispered Kate.

"Is he, though? Then let's have an—another look at him. He has as many gold chains about him as a shop on the Ponte Vecchio. Zoe would like him, he's so odd!"

At last, but not without great efforts, Kate succeeded in reaching a small chamber, where two others already were seated, and whose figures were undistinguishable in the obscurity of a studiously-shaded lamp.

"Isn't it strange, she never asked for Zoe?" said Purvis, as he took his seat on a sofa; "not to inquire for a person sick under her own r—r—roof?"

"Lady Hester is not acquainted with Mrs. Ricketts."

"Well, but sh—sh—she ought to be. Zoe made a party for her—a d—d—dinner-party; and had Hagg—Haggerstone and Foglass, and the rest of them. And after all, you know, they are only B—Bankers, these Onslows, and needn't give themselves airs."

"You have a letter for me, Mr. Purvis? will you pardon my impatience——"

"Yes, to be sure. I've a letter, and an enclosure in it, too; at least, it feels crisp like a note—a bank-note; that's the reason you're impatient; perhaps the re—re—remittance was long a-coming, eh?"

Kate made no reply to this speech, but her cheek grew scarlet as she heard it.

Purvis, meanwhile, spread his packet of papers before him, and began his search for Dalton's letter.

"No, that ain't it; that's from Foglass, all about Norwood, and his N—N—Newmarket affair. That's a letter from Lord Gullston's valet, with such a droll ac—account of the whole family. Zoe recom—mended him; and the poor fellow's very grateful, for he writes about all that goes on in the house. Lady G., it seems, has the temper of a f—f—fiend. Well, don't be im—impatient; I'll find your father's letter in a minute. He writes such a cr—cr—cramp old hand, one should detect it at once. I ta—take it that he's a bit of a character, the old gen—gentleman. I'm sure he is; but what have I done with his letter. Oh! here it is! here it is! and 'with haste' written on the corner, too."

Kate caught the letter impatiently, and, without any thought for Purvis or the place, tore it open at once. In doing so, the enclosure fell to the ground without her perceiving it; and, stranger still, it escaped the attention of Purvis; but that worthy man, not exactly venturing to read over her shoulder, had established himself directly in front, where, with his double eye-glass, he scanned every change in her features during the perusal.

"All well at home, I hope, eh? How she changes colour," muttered he to himself. "Nobody ill; nobody dead, eh?" asked he, louder. "It must be something serious, though; she's trembling like ague. Let me give you a chair; that is, if I can f—find one in this little den; they've got nothing but d—divans all round it." And he hurried forth into the larger *salon* in search of a seat.

It was not without considerable trouble to himself and inconvenience to various others that he at last succeeded, and returned to the boudoir with a massive arm-chair in his hands; but what was his dismay to find that Miss Dalton had made her escape in the meanwhile. In vain did he seek her through the *salons*, which now were rapidly thinning; the distinguished guests having already departed.

A stray group lingered here and there, conversing in a low tone; and around the fires were gathered little knots of ladies muffled and cloaked, and only waiting for the carriages. It was like a stage, when the performance was over! Scarcely deigning to notice the little man,

[illegible] pursued his search in every [illegible] leaving Purvis alone to tread the [illegible] as they extinguished the lights, [illegible] so that, defeated and dis- [illegible] sorrowfully confessing to his [illegible] his bold enterprise.

[illegible] and descended the stairs, he made [illegible] with some one or other of [illegible] responded to his questions in [illegible] as he reached the great [illegible] courteous enough to hear [illegible] "Who was th—th—that [illegible] and a wh—wh—white beard?"

[illegible] respectfully.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] heavy door after him, leaving [illegible] as much shame as his nature per- [illegible] his sensations, have we [illegible] pursue his way homeward, [illegible] from which he had just [illegible]

[illegible] the business of the evening [illegible] was the hour of her night [illegible] guests of those favoured precincts [illegible] and late dinners. These [illegible] and, except the little [illegible] other voice sounded as they [illegible]

[illegible] Lady Hester's boudoir, they found that lady [illegible] the whole circumstances of the morning's [illegible] which she continued without other interruption [illegible] a little gesture of the hand to each of the [illegible] as he came in. If the lady's manner was devoid of all [illegible] that of the gentlemen was less ceremonious still, for they stretched themselves on divans, rested their legs upon chairs, and stood back to the fire, with a degree of careless ease that bespoke them thoroughly at home. Jekyl, perhaps, the only one present who mingled with this freedom a certain courteous respect that no familiarity made him ever forget.

"And they are still here?" asked the Prince. "Actually in the house at this moment?"

"At this very moment!" responded she, emphatically.

"The whole thing passes belief," exclaimed he.

And now the listless loungers drew their chairs closer to hear the story, and laugh, as men do, who are seldom moved to mirth save when ridicule or malice are the provocatives.

"But you hav'n't heard the worst yet," said Midchikoff. "Pray tell them of your visitor of this evening."

And Lady Hester narrated the appearance of Mr. Purvis, who, having secured his entrance by a visit to his sister, had so unceremoniously presented himself in the drawing-room.

"Heaven knows what he said to his Royal Highness when I was away. To judge from his face, it must have been something atrocious; and the last thing he said on leaving was, 'I must try and not forget your agreeable friend's name.'"

"You might as well have invited *me*, as have had your 'friend' Purvis, after all," said a young Italian Noble, whose political opinions found no favour at Court.

"But what do you mean to do, my Lady?" asked Midchikoff. "Is the enemy to hold undisputed possession of the fortress?"

"It is precisely on that point I want advice, Prince."

"What if we form ourselves into a council of state?" said an Austrian General.

"By all means," said the others, who now formed a semicircle in front of Lady Hester's sofa.

"The youngest officer always speaks first," said the Austrian.

"Then that duty is mine," said a little man of about eighty-two or three, and who had represented France at half the Courts of Europe. "I should advise a protocol in the form of protest. It is a palpable invasion of territory, but, followed by an ample apology and a speedy evacuation, may be forgiven. There are historical warrants for such transgressions being accepted as acts almost of compulsion."

"The case of Anspach, for instance," said the Austrian, with a malicious smile.

"Precisely, General—precisely a case in point," rejoined the old Diplomate, with a bow and a smile that almost seemed grateful. "The shortest road to victory is ever the best."

"Let's try a fever, or a fire; by Jove! the sacrifice of a few chairs and window-curtains would be a cheap alternative," said George Onslow.

"Why not essay a compromise, my Lady," interposed a young German Secretary of Legation; "a mixed garrison, like that of Rastadt."

"Lady Hester's troops to mount guard alternately with the Ricketts'! Downright treason—base treason!" exclaimed another.

"What would you think of a special mission, my Lady," simpered Jekyl. "It would at least serve to enlighten us as to the views of the enemy. The discussion of the past often throws much light on the future."

"Jekyl wants to earn a decoration," said another, laughing; "he intends to be the envoy himself."

"I'll wager that I know Midchikoff's policy," said a young Sicilian, who always spoke with a frank fearlessness that is most rare with other Italians.

"Well, let us hear it," said the Prince, gravely.

"You would counsel the national expedient of retiring before the enemy, and making the country too cold to hold them?"

"How absurd," said Lady Hester, half angrily; "give up one's house to a set of people who have had the impertinence to intrude themselves unasked?"

"And yet Giasconi is right," said the Prince. "It is the best suggestion we have heard yet. Hostilities imply, to a certain extent, equality; negotiation is an acknowledgment of acquaintanceship; a dignified retreat, however, avoids either difficulty."

"In that case, let's starve them out," said George. "Suffer no supplies to be thrown into the place, and exact the most humble terms of submission."

"Then, where to go to? that's another question," said Lady Hester.

"His Eminence expects to see you in Rome," whispered the Abbé, who had waited for an opportunity for the suggestion. "I believe he relies on a promise."

"Very true; but not just yet. Besides, the season is almost over," said Lady Hester, with a slight degree of confusion.

"Don't be frightened, Abbé," whispered Jekyl in D'Esmonde's ear. "Her Ladyship is assuredly 'going to Rome' later on."

The Priest smiled, with an expression that told how fully he comprehended the phrase.

"There's a little Villa of mine, on the Lake of Como, very much at your service," said Midchikoff, with the easy indifference of one suggesting something perfectly indifferent to him.

"Do you mean La Rocca, Prince?" asked the Sicilian.

"Yes. They tell me it is prettily situated, but I've never seen it. The Empress passed a few weeks there last year, and liked it," said Midchikoff, languidly.

"Really, Prince, if I don't know how to accept, I am still more at a loss for power to refuse your offer."

"When will you go?" said he, dryly, and taking out his memorandum-book to write.

"What says Mr. Jekyl?" said Lady Hester, turning to that bland personage, who, without apparently attending to what went forward, had heard every syllable of it.

"This is Tuesday," said Jekyl. "There's not much to be done; the Villa wants for nothing: I know it perfectly."

"Ah! it's comfortable, then?" said the Prince, with a slight degree of animation.

"La Rocca is all that Contarete's taste could make it," replied Jekyl.

"Poor Contarete! he was an excellent maître d'hotel," said Midchikoff. "He's still with me, somewhere; I rather believe in Tartary, just now."

"Your Ladyship may leave this on Thursday," said Jekyl; who well knew that he was paying the most flattering compliment to Midchikoff in naming the shortest possible time for preparation.

"Will this be inconvenient, Prince?" asked Lady Hester.

"No; not in the least. If Jekyl will precede you by a couple of hours, I trust all will be ready."

"With your permission, then, we will say Thursday," said she, who, with her habitual delight in novelty, was already wild with pleasure at the whole scheme.

"Perhaps I'll come and visit you," said Midchikoff. "I shall have to go to Vienna soon."

Lady Hester bowed and smiled her acknowledgments for this not over gracious speech.

"May we follow you, too, Lady Hester?" asked the Sicilian.

"We expect that much from your loyalty, gentlemen. Our exile will test your fidelity."

"There's something or other inconvenient about the stables," said Midchikoff, "but I forget what it is; they are up a mountain, or down in a valley. I don't remember it, but the Emperor said it was wrong, and should be changed."

"They are on the opposite side of the Lake, Prince," interposed Jekyl, "and you must cross over to your carriage by boat."

"Oh, delightful—quite delightful!" exclaimed Lady Hester, with childish joy, at the novelty.

"La Rocca is on a little promontory," said Jekyl, "only approachable from the water, for the mountain is quite inaccessible."

"You shall have a road made, if you wish it," said the Prince, languidly.

"On no account. I wouldn't for the world destroy the isolation of the spot."

"Do you happen to remember, Mr. Jekyl, if there be any pictures there?"

"There are some perfect gems, by Greuze."

"Oh! that's where they are, is it? I could never call to mind where they were left."

The conversation now became general, in discussing Lady Hester's change of abode, the life they should all lead when on the Lake, and the innumerable stories that would be circulated to account for her sudden departure. This same mystery was not the least agreeable feature of the whole, and Lady Hester never wearied in talking of all the speculations her new step was certain to originate; and although some of the company regretted the approaching closure of a house which formed the resource of every evening, others were not sorry at the prospect of anything which offered a change to the monotony of their lives.

"You'll come to breakfast to-morrow, Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester, as he followed the departing guests. "I shall want you the whole day."

He bowed with his hand to his heart, and never did features of like mould evince a deeper aspect of devotion.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

JEKYL'S COUNSELS.

One of the most striking characteristics of our present age is the singular mixture of frivolity and seriousness—the almost absurd contrast between grave inquiry and reckless dissipation, which pervades the well-to-do classes. Never was there a period when merely sensual gratification was more highly prized and paid for; and never, perhaps, a time when every rank in life was more eager in the pursuit of knowledge. To produce this state of things a certain compromise was necessary, and while the mere man of pleasure affected a taste for literature and politics, the really active-minded either sought his relaxation, or extended his influence, by mingling in scenes of frivolity and amusement.

The age which made Dandies Philosophers, made Lord Chancellors droll, and Bishops eccentric. A paradoxical spirit was abroad, and it seemed to be a matter of pride with every one, to do something out of his station. The whole temper of society, and the tone of conversation, exhibited this new taste.

Lady Hester Onslow was not a bad specimen of the prevailing mania. There was by nature a certain fidgety, capricious volatility about her, that defied anything like a regular pursuit, or a continued purpose. With a reasonably quick apprehension and no judgment, in being everything, she became nothing. Always mistaking sympathies for convictions, it was quite sufficient to interest her imagination, to secure her adhesion, not, indeed, that it was worth much when obtained, seeing that she was but a feeble ally at the best. Her employment of the day was a type of herself. The mornings were passed in mesmeric experiences with her doctor, or, what she fancied were, theological discussions with the Abbé d'Esmonde. It would be difficult to say in which the imaginative exaltation more predominated. All the authentic and incredible phenomena of the one, all the miraculous pretensions of the other, were too little for a credulity that stopped at nothing. Of second sight, remote sympathy, and saintly miracles, she never could hear enough! "Give me facts," she would say; by which she meant narratives. "I will have no theories, Doctor." "Don't bear me down with arguments, Mons. l'Abbé." "Facts, and facts alone have any influence with *me*."

Now, such facts as she asked for were easily obtainable, and the greatest miser need not have grudged her an ample meal of them. Many of the facts, too, possessed the pleasing feature of being personal in their interest. One day, it was a charming young patient of the Doctor, who, having touched a tress of Lady Hester's hair, made the most astonishing revelations of her Ladyship's disposition; telling facts of her feelings, her nature, and even her affections, that "she knew were only confided to her own heart." Various little incidents of her daily life were foretold, even to such minute matters as the purchase of articles of jewellery, which she had not even seen at the time, and only met her eyes by accident afterwards. The Abbé, with equal success, assured her of the intense interest taken in her by the Church. Beautifully-bound and richly-illustrated books were offered to her, with the flattering addition, that prayers were then being uttered at many a shrine for her enlightenment in their perusal. Less asked to conform herself to a new belief, than to reconcile the faith to her own notions, she was given the very widest latitude to her opinions. If she grew impatient at argument, a subtle illustration, an apt metaphor, or sometimes a happy "*mot*," settled the question. The Abbé was a clever talker, and varied his subjects with all the skill of a master. He knew how to invoke to his aid all that poetry, art, and romance could contribute. The theme was a grand one when the imagination was to be interested, and really deserved a better listener, for, save when the

miraculous interposition of saints, or the gaudy ceremonials of the Church were spoken of, she heard the subject with indifference, if not apathy. The consideration of self could, however, always bring her back; and it was ever a successful flattery to assure her how fervently such a Cardinal prayed for her "right-mindedness," and how eagerly even his Holiness looked forward to the moment of counting her among his children.

Her very tastes—those same tastes that ascetic Protestantism was always cavilling at—were beautifully Roman. The Church liked display. Witness her magnificence and splendour, her glorious cathedrals, the pomp and grandeur of her ceremonial! As to music, the choir of the "Duomo" was seraphic, and needed not the association of the dim, vaulted aisles, the distant altar, and the chequered rays of stained-glass windows, to wrap the soul in a fervour of enthusiasm. Even Beauty was cherished by the Church, and the fair Madonnas were types of an admiring love that was beautifully catholic in its worship.

With all this, the work of conversion was a Penelope's web, that must each day be begun anew, for, as the hour of the Cascini drew nigh, Lady Hester's carriage drew up, and mesmerism, miracles, and all gave way to the fresher interests of courtly loungers, chit-chat, and "bouquets of camelias."

For the next hour or so, her mind was occupied with the gossiping stories of Florentine life, its surface details all recounted by the simpering dandies who gathered around her carriage; its deeper—not unfrequently darker histories—being the province of Mr. Albert Jekyl. Then home to luncheon, for, as Haggerstone related, she dined always after the Opera, and it was then, somewhere verging on midnight, that she really began to live. Then, in all the blaze of dress and jewels, with beauty little impaired by years, and a manner the perfection of that peculiar school to which she attached herself, she was indeed a most attractive person.

Kate Dalton's life was, of course, precisely the same. Except the few hours given to controversial topics, and which she passed in reading, and the occasional change from driving to riding in the Cascini, Kate's day was exactly that of her friend. Not, however, with the same results; for while one was wearied with the tame routine of unvarying pleasure, tired of the monotonous circle of amusement, the other became each day more and more enamoured of a life so unchanging in its happiness. What was uniformity to Lady Hester, imparted a sense of security to Kate. It was not alone the splendour that surrounded her, the thousand objects of taste and elegance that seemed to multiply around them that captivated her so much; it was the absence of all care, the freedom

from every thought that this state was a mere passing one. This Kate felt to be the very highest of enjoyments, and when at night she whispered to herself, "To-morrow will be like to-day," she had said everything that could brighten anticipation.

Her father's letter was the first shock to this delightful illusion! Her own false position of splendour, in contrast to his poverty, now came up palpably before her, and in place of those blissful reveries in which she often passed hours, there rose to her mind the bitter self-accusings of a penitent spirit. She never slept during the night; the greater part of it she spent in tears. Her absence from home, brief as it was, was quite enough to make her forget much of its daily life. She could, it is true, recal the penury and the privation, but not the feelings that grew out of them. How changed must he have become to stoop to this! was the exclamation that she uttered again and again. Where was all that Dalton pride they used to boast of? What became of that family dignity which once was their bulwark against every blow of fortune?

To these thoughts succeeded the sadder one, of, what course remained for her to adopt? A difficulty the greater, since she but half understood what was required of her. He spoke of a bill, and yet the letter contained none: before she broke the seal, it felt as though there was an enclosure, yet she found none; and if there were, of what use would it be? It was perfectly impossible that she could approach Sir Stafford with such a request; every sense of shame, delicacy, and self-respect revolted at the very thought. Still less could she apply to Lady Hester, whose extravagant and wasteful habits always placed her in want of money, and yet to refuse her father on grounds which he would deem purely selfish, was equally out of the question. She well knew that in a moment of anger and impatience—stung by what he would call the ingratitude of his children—he would probably himself write to Sir Stafford, narrating every circumstance that drove him to the step. Oh, that she had never left him—never ceased to live the life of want and hardship to which time had accustomed her; all the poverty she had ever known brought no such humiliation as this! Poor Nelly's lot now was a hundred-fold superior to hers. She saw, too, that reserve once broken on such a theme, her father would not scruple to renew the application as often as he needed money. It was clear enough that he saw no embarrassment, nor any difficulty for her in the matter; that it neither could offend her feelings, nor compromise her position. Could she descend to an evasive or equivocal reply, his temper would as certainly boil over, and an insulting letter would at once be addressed to Sir Stafford. Were she to make the request and fail, he would order her

[illegible] she leave the house of her [illegible].

[illegible] in her mind, the [illegible] the bitterest tears [illegible] sorrow mingled. Many a [illegible] self-devotion and sacrifice rose to [illegible] would have [illegible] to any wound [illegible] and at others, all [illegible] and she cried as if her very heart were bursting.

[illegible] went into the garden. It was [illegible] days in Italy—[illegible] although still early, the sun was [illegible] the heavy dew, were bursting [illegible] the warm glow. The fountains [illegible] and all seemed animated by that [illegible] breath of early morning. All save [illegible] slow step, loitered along the [illegible] thoughts.

[illegible] she could see to her difficulties [illegible] her father and sister, away from a world in which she had no pretension to live. And this, too, just when that same world had cast its fascinations round her—just when its [illegible] had gained possession of her heart, and made her feel that [illegible] was ignoble and unworthy. No other course seemed, however, to offer itself; and she had just determined on its adoption, when the short, quick step of some one following her, made her turn her head. As she did so, her name was pronounced, and Mr. Albert Jekyl, with his hat courteously removed, advanced towards her.

"I see with what care Miss Dalton protects the roses of her cheeks," said he, smiling; "and yet how few there are that know this simple secret."

"You give me a credit I have no claim to, Mr. Jekyl. I have almost forgotten the sight of a rising sun, but this morning I did not feel quite well—a headache—a sleepless night——"

"Perhaps caused by anxiety," interposed he, quietly. "I wish I had discovered your loss in time, but I only detected that it must be yours, when I reached home."

"I don't comprehend you," said she, with some hesitation.

"Is not this yours, Miss Dalton?" said he, producing the bill, which had fallen unseen from her father's letter. "I found it on the floor of

the small boudoir, and not paying much attention to it at the time, did not perceive the signature, which would at once have betrayed the ownership."

"It must have dropped from a letter I was reading," said Kate, whose cheek was now scarlet, for she knew Jekyl well enough to be certain that her whole secret was by that time in his hands. Slighter materials than this would have sufficed for his intelligence to construct a theory upon. Nothing in his manner, however, evinced this knowledge, for he handed her the paper with an air of most impassive quietude; while, as if to turn her thoughts from any unpleasantness of the incident, he said,

"You hav'n't yet heard, I suppose, of Lady Hester's sudden resolve to quit Florence?"

"Leave Florence! and for where?" asked she, hurriedly.

"For Midchikoff's villa at Como. We discussed it all last night after you left, and in twenty-four hours we are to be on the road."

"What is the reason of this hurried departure?"

"The Ricketts' invasion gives the pretext; but of course you know better than I do what a share the novelty of the scheme lends to its attractions."

"And we are to leave this to-morrow!" said Kate, rather to herself than for her companion.

Jekyl marked well the tone and the expression of the speaker, but said not a word.

Kate stood for a few seconds lost in thought. Her difficulties were thickening around her, and not a gleam of light shone through the gloomy future before her. At last, as it were overpowered by the torturing anxieties of her situation, she covered her face with her hands to hide the tears that would gush forth in spite of her.

"Miss Dalton will forgive me," said Jekyl, speaking in a low and most respectful voice, "if I step for once from the humble path I have tracked for myself in life, and offer my poor services as her adviser."

Nothing could be more deferential than the speech, or the way in which it was uttered, and yet Kate heard it with a sense of pain. She felt that her personal independence was already in peril, and that the meek and bashful Mr. Jekyl had gained a mastery over her. He saw all this—he read each struggle of her mind—and, were retreat practicable, he would have retreated, but, the step once taken, the only course was, "forwards."

"Miss Dalton may reject my counsels, but she will not despise the devotion in which they are proffered. A mere accident"—here he glanced at the paper which she still held in her fingers—"a mere ac-

cident has shown me that you have a difficulty; one for which neither your habits nor knowledge of life can suggest the solution." He paused, and a very slight nod from Kate emboldened him to proceed. "Were it not so, Miss Dalton?—were the case one for which your own exquisite tact could suffice, I never would have ventured on the liberty. I, who have watched you with wondering admiration, directing and guiding your course amid shoals, and reefs, and quicksands, where the most skilful might have found shipwreck, it would have been hardihood indeed for *me* to have offered my pilotage. But here, if I err not greatly, here is a new and unknown sea, and here I may be of service to you."

"Is it so plain, then, what all this means?" said Kate, holding out the bill towards Jekyl.

"Alas! Miss Dalton," said he, with a faint smile, "these are no enigmas to us who mix in all the worries and cares of life."

"Then how do you read the riddle," said she, almost laughing at the easy flippancy of his tone.

"Mr. Dalton being an Irish gentleman of a kind disposition and a facile temper, suffers his tenantry to run most grievously into arrear. They won't pay, and he won't make them; his own creditors having no sympathy with such proceedings, become pressing and importunate. Mr. Dalton grows angry, and they grow irritable; he makes his agent write to *them*—they 'instruct' their attorney to write to him. Mr. D. is puzzled, and were it not that——but may I go on?"

"Of course; proceed," said she, smiling.

"You'll not be offended, though?" said he, "because, if I have not the privilege of being frank, I shall be worthless to you."

"There is no serious offence without intention."

"Very true; but I do not wish there should be even a trivial transgression."

"I'm not afraid. Go on," said she, nodding her head.

"Where was I, then? Oh! I remember. I said that Mr. Dalton, seeing difficulties thickening and troubles gathering, suddenly bethinks him that he has a daughter, a young lady of such attractions that, in a society where wealth and splendour and rank hold highest place, her beauty has already established a dominion which nothing, save her gentleness, prevents being a despotism."

"Mr. Jekyl mistakes the part of friend when he becomes flatterer."

"There is no flattery in a plain unadorned truth," said he, hastily.

"And were it all as you say," rejoined she, speaking with a heightened colour and a flashing eye, "how could such circumstances be linked with those you spoke of?"

"Easily enough, if I did but dare to tell it," was his reply.

is too late for reserve; go on freely," said she, with a faint sigh.
'l resumed:
t. Dalton knows—there are thousands could have told him so—that
ghter may be a Princess to-morrow if she wishes it. She has but
see her rank and her nationality, and there is not a land in
in whose Peerage she may not inscribe her name. It is too late
erve," said he, quickly, "and consequently too late for resentment.
ust not be angry with me now; I am but speaking in your pre-
what all the world says behind your back. Hearing this, and
ng it, as all believe it, what is there more natural, than that he
address himself to her, at whose disposal lie all that wealth can
s? The sun bestows many a gleam of warmth and brightness
he reaches the zenith. Do not mistake me. This request was
y fair; it was ill-advised. Your freedom should never have been
lied for such a mere trifle. Had your father but seen with his
es your position here, he would never have done this; but, being
here is no harm in it."
t what am I to do?" said Kate, trembling with embarrassment
ation together.
nd the money, of course," said he, coolly.
t how,—from what source?"
ur own benevolence; none other," said he, as calmly. "There
uestion of a favour; no stooping to an obligation necessary. You
mply give your promise to repay it at some future day, not
ing when; and I will find the Banker but too happy to treat
ou."
t what prospect have I of such ability to pay; what resources can
n upon?"
u will be angry if I repeat, myself," said Jekyl, with deep
y.
am already angry with myself that I should have listened to your
l so indulgently; my troubles must, indeed, have affected me
when I so far forgot myself."
l dropped his head forward on his breast, and looked a picture of
; after awhile he said,
r Stafford Onslow would, I well know, but be honoured by your
him the slight favour; but I could not counsel you to do so.
eelings would have to pay too severe a sacrifice, and hence I
making it a mere business matter; depositing some ornament—
lace you were tired of; a bracelet; anything; in fact—a nothing;
us there is neither a difficulty nor a disclosure."

"[illegible]" said Kate; "and what I have, have been [illegible]"

"[illegible] with your word," said Jekyl, [illegible]

"[illegible] will these few things [illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible] in an accent of intense [illegible]"

"[illegible]"

[illegible] that pang was greater than all [illegible]

"[illegible] in the matter whatever," said [illegible] "[illegible] will, of course, have many things to [illegible] the carriage and your maid, [illegible] The last shop on the right-hand side [illegible] is unpromising enough outside, but [illegible] I will be in waiting to [illegible] the whole will be concluded; and if [illegible] you can enclose the sum, and post it at [illegible]"

[illegible] arrangement which shocked Kate, [illegible] and propriety, there was one [illegible] them all. "She should be [illegible]—she, who alone of all his children had never [illegible] should now materially assist him. She knew [illegible] the sufferings and anxieties his straitened [illegible] the half-desperation in [illegible] and almost broken-hearted! and she had witnessed that outbreak of joy he would indulge in when an unexpected help had suddenly lifted him from the depth of his poverty. To be the messenger of such good tidings—to be associated in his mind with this assistance—to win his fervent "God bless you!" she would have put life itself in peril, and when Jekyl placed so palpably before her the promptitude with which the act could be accomplished, all hesitation ceased, and she promised to be punctual at the appointed place by three o'clock that same afternoon.

"It is too early to expect to see Lady Hester," said Jekyl; "and, indeed, my real business here this morning was with yourself, so that now I shall drive out to Midchikoff's and make all the arrangements about the Villa. 'Till three, then, good-by!"

"Good-by," said Kate, for the first time disposed to feel warmly to the little man, and half reproach herself with some of the prejudices she used to entertain regarding him.

Jekyl now took his way to the stables, and ordering a Brougham to be got ready for him, sauntered into the house, and took his coffee while he waited.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"RACCA MORLACHE."

There is something of medieval look and air about the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, which gives it a peculiar interest to the traveller. The quaint little low shops on either side, all glittering with gold and gems—the gorgeous tiaras of diamonds—the richly-enamelled cups and vases aside of the grotesque ornaments of peasant costume—the cumbrous ear-rings of stamped gold—the old-fashioned clasps and buckles of massive make—the chains fashioned after long-forgotten models—the strings of oriental pearls, costly and rare enough for queens to wear—are all thrown about in a rich profusion, curiously in contrast to the humble sheds—for they are little more—that hold them.

The incessant roll of equipages—the crowd and movement of a great city—the lingering peasant, gazing with rapturous eyes at the glittering wares—the dark Israelitish face that peers from within—the ever flowing tide of population of every rank and age and country, giving a bustle and animation to the scene, so beautifully relieved by the view that opens on the centre of the bridge, and where, in a vacant space, the Arno is seen wending peacefully along, and scattering its circling eddies beneath the graceful arches of the "Santa Trinitá;" that little glimpse of hill, and vineyard, and river, the cypress-clad heights of San Miniato, and the distant mountain of Vallombrosa, more beautiful far than all the gold Pactolus ever rolled, or all the gems that ever glittered on crown or coronet.

There was one stall at the end of the bridge, so humble looking and so scantily provided, that no stranger was seen to linger beside it. A few coral ornaments for peasant wear, some stamped medals for pious use, and some of those little silver tokens hung up by devout hands as votive offerings at a holy shrine, were all that appeared, while, as if to confirm the impression of the scanty traffic that went on, the massive door was

[illegible] like the [illegible] an almost erased inscription, [illegible] that this was the shop of [illegible]

[illegible] in the stories that went [illegible] many of the accounts were [illegible] that from that lowly roof went [illegible] of many a tottering state, [illegible] replace a dynasty. To him [illegible] leaders of rebellious de- [illegible] the Carlist and the Chris- [illegible] the fearless pro- [illegible] and his profit [illegible] for the rest, in what [illegible] wealth was to flow, whether to [illegible] a faith, or to dese- [illegible] bind their fetters more [illegible]

[illegible] a style like royalty [illegible] magnificence he need have denied [illegible] from which he should be [illegible] of palaces as of prisons; [illegible] habitation, which for above [illegible] name than the "Casa [illegible]

[illegible] so singular; among [illegible] was accustomed to visit the [illegible] while some alleged [illegible] came by water, and [illegible] and directed its [illegible] With these rumours we [illegible] himself have we more than a [illegible]

[illegible] the door, she had all but deter- [illegible] The arguments, which in the morning [illegible] weak and futile, and she was [illegible] momentary yielding to Jekyl's [illegible] was whether to drive on without further [illegible] to the effect that she had called, but [illegible] This seemed the better and more courteous [illegible] and while she was yet speaking to the dark-eyed, hooked- [illegible] who appeared at the door, Jekyl came up.

"Be quick, Miss Dalton! Don't lose an instant," said he. "Morlache is going to the Palace, and we shall miss him."

"But I have changed my mind. I have resolved not to accept this assistance. It is better—far better that I should not."

"It is too late to think of that now," said he, interrupting, and speaking with some slight degree of irritation.

"How too late? What do you mean?"

"That I have already told Morlache the whole story, and obtained his promise for the loan."

"Oh, Sir! why have you done this?" cried she, in a voice of anguish.

"I had your free permission for it, Miss Dalton. When we parted this morning, the matter was fully agreed on between us; but still, if you desire to retract, your secret is in safe keeping. Morlache never betrays a confidence."

"And he has heard my name!" cried she, in a broken, sobbing tone.

"Not for the first time, be assured. Even Crœsus looked up from his ingots to ask if it were 'la belle Dalton;' and when I said 'Yes,' 'That's enough,' replied he; 'would that all my moneys had so safe investment!' But stay; there is Purvis yonder. He is pretending to examine an eye-glass in that shop opposite, but I see well that he is there only *en vidette*."

"What shall I do?" exclaimed the poor girl, now torn by impulses and emotions the most opposite.

"One thing you must do at once," said Jekyl; "get out of the carriage, and visit two or three of the shops, as if in quest of some article of jewellery. His anxiety to learn the precise object of your search will soon draw him from his 'lair.'"

The decision of this counsel, almost like a command, so far imposed upon Kate that she at once descended, and took Jekyl's arm along the bridge. They had not gone many yards, when the short, little, shuffling step of Purvis was heard behind them. Lingering to gaze at some of the splendid objects exposed for sale, they at last reached a very splendid stall, where diamonds, pearls, and rubies lay in heaps of gorgeous profusion. And now Purvis had stationed himself exactly behind them, with his head most artistically adjusted to hear everything that passed between them.

Jekyl seemed to feel his presence as if by an instinct, and without ever turning his eye from the glass-case, said, in a voice of some disparagement,

[illegible]

[illegible] You're [illegible]

[illegible] said Jekyl, [illegible] scene unendurable [illegible]

[illegible] they're all as poor as [illegible]——"

"[illegible] your discretion is invaluable," said [illegible] question for us."

"[illegible]," said Purvis, who, once full of a theme, never paid any attention to what was said by others. "Midchi—Matson—Maiden—k—k—off; he owns half of——"

"Never mind what he owns; but remember that Miss Dalton is waiting all this time," said Jekyl, who very rarely so far lost command of his temper; and at last Purvis yielded, and entered the shop.

"Come, now," said Jekyl to his companion; "it will take him full five minutes to say 'Châtelaine,' and before that we shall be safel housed." And with these words he hurried her along, laughing, in spite of all her anxieties, at the absurdity of the adventure. "He'll see the carriage when he comes out," added he, "and so I'll tell the coachman to drive slowly on towards the Pitti." And thus, without asking her consent, he assumed the full guidance at once, and, ere she well knew how or why, she found herself within the dark and dusky precincts of Morlache's shop.

Jekyl never gave Kate much time for hesitation, but hurried her along through a narrow passage, from which a winding flight of stone steps led downwards to a considerable distance, and at last opened upon a neat little chamber on the level of the Arno, the window opening on the stream, and only separated from it by a little terrace, covered with geraniums, in full flower. There was a strange undulating motion that seemed communicated from the stream to the apartment, which Jekyl at once explained to his companion as a contrivance for elevating and depressing the chamber with the changes in the current of the river, otherwise the room must have been under water for a considerable portion of the year. While he descanted on the ingenuity of the mechanism, and pointed attention to the portraits along the walls—the Kings and Kaisirs with whom Morlache had held monied relations—the minutes slipped on, and Jekyl's powers as a talker were called upon to speak against time, the fidgety nervousness of his manner, and the frequent glances he bestowed at the timepiece, showing how impatiently he longed for the Jew's arrival. To all Kate's scruples he opposed some plausible pretext, assuring her, that if she desired it, no mention should be made of the loan; that the visit might be as one of mere curiosity, to see some of those wonderful gems which had once graced the crowns of royalty; and that, in any case, the brief delay would disembarrass them on the score of Purvis, whose spirit of inquiry would have called him off in some other direction. At last, when now upwards of half an hour had elapsed, and no sound nor sight bore token of the Jew's coming, Jekyl resolved to go in search of him, and requesting Kate to wait patiently for a few minutes, he left the room.

At first, when she found herself alone, every noise startled and terrified her; the minutes, as she watched the clock, seemed drawn out to hours; she listened with an aching anxiety for Jekyl's return, while, with a sorrow-

ing heart, she reproached herself for ever having come there. To this state of almost feverish excitement succeeded a low and melancholy depression, in which the time passed without her consciousness; the half-dulled sounds of the city, the monotonous plash of the stream as it flowed past, the distant cries of the boatmen as they guided their swift barques down the strong current, aiding and increasing a feeling that was almost lethargic. Already the sun had sunk below the hills, and the tall palaces were throwing their giant shadows across the river, the presage of approaching night, and still she sat there all alone. Jekyl had never returned, nor had any one descended the stairs since his departure. Twice had she shaken off the dreamy stupor that was over her, and tried to find the door of the chamber, but, concealed in the wainscoting, it defied her efforts; and now, worn out with anxiety, and disappointed, she sat down beside the window, gazing listlessly at the water, and wondering when and how her captivity was to end.

The lamps were now being lighted on the quays, and long columns of light streaked the dark river. Across these a black object was seen to glide, and as it passed, Kate could perceive it was a boat that advanced slowly against the current, and headed up the stream. As she watched, it came nearer and nearer; and now she could hear distinctly the sounds of voices talking in French. What, however, was her surprise when, instead of making for the centre arches of the bridge, the boat was vigorously impelled across the river, and its course directed towards the very place where she sat.

However painful her situation before, now, it became downright agony. It was clear there were persons coming; in another moment she would be discovered, unable to explain by what course of events she had come there, and thus, exposed to every surmise and suspicion that chance or calumny might originate. In that brief, but terrible moment, what self-accusings, what reproaches of Jekyl crossed her mind; and yet all these were as nothing to the misery which coming events seemed full of. For a second or two she stood irresolute, and then, with something like an instinct of escape, she stepped out upon the little terrace that supported the flowers, and, trembling with fear, took her stand beneath the shadow of one of the great buttresses of the bridge. The frail and half-rotten timbers creaked and bent beneath her weight, and close under her feet rolled along the dark river, with a low and sullen sound like moaning. Meanwhile the boat came nearer, and slowly gliding along, was at last brought up at the window. Two figures passed into the chamber, and the boatmen, as if performing a long-accustomed task, rowed out a few lengths into the stream to wait.

From the window, which still remained open, a stream of light now issued, and Kate's quick hearing could detect the rustling sound of papers on the table.

"There they are," said a voice, the first accents of which she knew to belong to the Abbé d'Esmonde. "There they are, Signor Morlache. We have no concealments nor reserve with you. Examine them for yourself. You will find reports from nearly every part of the kingdom, some more, some less, favourable in their bearings, but all agreeing in the main fact, that the cause is a great one, and the success all but certain."

"I have told you before," said the Jew, speaking in a thick, guttural utterance, "that *my* sympathies never lead me into expense. Every solvent cause is good, every bankrupt one the reverse, in my estimation."

"Even upon that ground I am ready to meet you. The Committee——"

"Aye, who are the Committee," interrupted the Jew, hastily.

"The Committee contains some of the first Catholic names of Ireland; men of landed fortune and great territorial influence, together with several of the higher Clergy.

"The Bishops?"

"The Bishops almost to a man are with us in heart; but their peculiar position requires the most careful and delicate conduct. No turn of fortune must implicate *them*, or our cause is lost for ever."

"If your cause be all you say it is,—if the nationality be so strong, and the energies so powerful, as you describe,—why not try the issue, as the Italians and the Hungarians are about to do?" said Morlache. "I can understand a loan for a defined and real object—the purchase of military stores and equipment, to provide arms and ammunition; and I can understand how the lender, too, could calculate his risk of profit or loss on the issue of the struggle; but here, you want half a million sterling; and for what?"

"To win a kingdom!" cried D'Esmonde, enthusiastically. "To bring back to the fold of the Church the long lost sheep; and make Ireland, as she once was, the centre of holy zeal and piety!"

"I am not a Pope, nor a Cardinal,—not even a Monsignore," said Morlache, with a bitter laugh. "You must try other arguments with me; and once more I say, why not join that party who already are willing to risk their lives in the venture?"

"Have I not told you what and who they are who form this party," said D'Esmonde, passionately. "Read those papers before you. Study the secret reports sent from nearly every parish of the kingdom. In

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Bishops will be in [illegible] with the heads of the government; all the little [illegible] and [illegible] will be played off; and our [illegible] the [illegible] stand high in public esteem. [illegible] and [illegible] of our enemies will give fresh lustre to our [illegible] and our calm and dignified demeanour form the con[illegible] to that rampant intolerance that assails us."

"But for all this classic dignity," said Morlache, sneeringly, "you

need no money—such nobility of soul is, after all, the cheapest of luxuries."

"You are mistaken—mistaken egregiously," broke in D'Esmonde. "It is precisely at that moment that we shall require a strong friend behind us. The 'Press' is all-powerful in England. If it does not actually guide, it is the embodiment of public opinion, without which men would never clothe their sentiments in fitting phrase, or invest them with those short and pithy apothegms that form the watchwords of party. Happily, if it be great it is venal; and although the price be a princely ransom, the bargain is worth the money. Fifty, or a hundred thousand pounds, at that nick, would gain our cause. We shall need many advocates; some, in assumed self-gratulation over their own prescience, in supporting our claims in time past, and reiterating the worn assertion of our attachment to the throne and the constitution; others, to contrast our bearing with the obtrusive loyalty of Orangeism; and others, again, going further than either, to proclaim that but for us, Ireland would have been lost to England; and had not our allegiance stood in the breach, the cause of rebellion would have triumphed."

"And is this character for loyalty worth so much money?" said the Jew, slowly.

"Not as a mere empty name—not as a vain boast," replied D'Esmonde, quickly; "but if the tree be stunted, its fruits are above price. Our martyrdom will not go unrewarded. The moment of peril over, the season of concessions will begin. How I once hated the word!—how I used to despise those who were satisfied with these crumbs from the table of the rich man, not knowing that the time would come when we should set at the board ourselves. Concession! —the vocabulary has no one word I'd change for it—it is conquest, dominion, sovereignty, all together. By concession, we may be all we strive for, but never could wrest by force. Now, my good Signor Morlache, these slow and sententious English are a most impulsive people, and are often betrayed into the strangest excesses of forgiveness and forgetfulness; insomuch, that I feel assured that nothing will be refused us, if we but play our game prudently."

"And what is the game?" said the Jew, with impatience; "for it seems to me that you are not about to strike for freedom, like the Hungarians or the Lombards. What, then, is the prize you strive for?"

"The Catholicism of Ireland, and then of England—the subjugation of the haughtiest rebel to the Faith—the only one whose disaffection menaces our Holy Church; for the Lutheranism of the German is

scarce worth the name of enemy. England, once Catholic, the World is our own!"

The enthusiasm of his manner, and the excited tones of his round, full voice, seemed to check the Jew, whose cold, sarcastic features were turned towards the Priest with an expression of wonderment.

"Let us come back from all this speculation to matter of plain fact," said Morlache, after a long pause. "What securities are offered for the repayment of this sum?—for, although the theme be full of interest to you, to me it has but the character of a commercial enterprise."

"But it ought not," said D'Esmonde, passionately. "The downfall of the tyranny of England is *your* cause as much as *ours*. What Genoa and Venice were in times past, they may become again. The supremacy of the seas once wrested from that haughty power, the long-slumbering energies of Southern Europe will awaken; the great trading communities of the Levant will resume their ancient place; and the rich argosies of the East once more will float over the waters of the tideless sea."

"Not in our time, Abbé—not in our time," said the Jew, smiling.

"But are we only to build for ourselves?" said D'Esmonde. "Was it thus your own great forefathers raised the glorious Temple?"

The allusion called up but a cold sneer on the Israelite's dark countenance, and D'Esmonde knew better than to repeat a blow that showed itself to be powerless.

A tap at the door here broke in upon the colloquy, and Jekyl's voice was heard on the outside.

"Say you are engaged—that you cannot admit him," whispered D'Esmonde. "I do not wish that he should see me here."

"A thousand pardons, Morlache," said Jekyl, from without; "but when I followed you to the 'Pitti,' I left a young lady here—has she gone away, or is she still here?"

"I never saw her," said Morlache. "She must have left before I returned."

"Thanks—good-by," said Jekyl; and his quick foot was heard ascending the stairs again.

"The night air grows chilly," said the Abbé, as he arose and shut the window; and the boatmen, mistaking the sound for a summons to approach, pulled up to the spot.

With a sudden spring, Kate bounded into the boat, while yet some distance off, and hurriedly said, "To the stairs, beside the Santa Trinitá."

The clink of money, as she took out her purse, made the brief command intelligible, and they shot down the stream with speed.

"Do not speak of me," said she, covering her face with her kerchief as she stepped from the boat; and a gold Napoleon enforced the caution.

It was now night—the lamps were all lighted, and the streets crowded by that bustling throng of population whose hours of business or pleasure commence when day has closed. A thin drizzling rain was falling, and the footway was wet and muddy. Dressed in the height of fashion—all her attire suited to a carriage—Kate set out to walk homeward, with a heart sinking from terror. Many a time in her condition of poverty, with patched and threadbare cloak, had she travelled the dark road from Lichtenthal to Baden after nightfall, fearless and undismayed, no dread of danger nor of insult occurring to her happy spirit, the "Gute nacht" of some homeward-bound peasant the only sound that saluted her; but now, she was no longer in the secluded valley of the great Faterland; her way led through the crowded thoroughfares of a great city, with all its crash, and noise, and movement.

If in her wild confusion she had no thought for each incident of the morning, her mind was full of "self-accusings." How explain to Lady Hester her long absence, and her return alone, and on foot? Her very maid, Nina, might arraign her conduct, and regard her with distrust and suspicion. How should she appear in Jekyl's eyes, who already knew her secret; and, lastly, what answer return to her poor father's letter—that letter which was the cause of all her misfortunes?

"I will tell him everything," said she to herself, as she went along. "I will detail the whole events of this morning, and he shall see that my ailure has not come of lukewarmness. I will also strive to show him e nature of my position, and let him know the full extent of the sacri- e he would exact from me. If he persist, what then? Is it better to back and share the poverty I cannot alleviate? But what alternative re I? Jekyl's flatteries are but fictions. Would I wish them to be erwise? Alas! I cannot tell; I do not even know my own heart now! for one true-hearted friend to guide and counsel me!" She thought eorge Onslow—rash, impetuous, and ardent; she thought of the t, D'Esmonde—but the last scene in which he figured made her k with terror from the man of dark intrigues and secret wiles; she thought of poor Hanserl, who, in all the simplicity of his nature, ished to have that moment beside her. "But *he* would say, 'Go -return to the humble home you quitted—put away all the glitter- uds that are clinging to and clasping your very heart. Take,

once more, your lowly place at hearth and board, and forget the bright dream of pleasure you have passed through.' But how forget it? Has it not become my hope, my very existence? How easy for those who have not tasted the intoxicating cup, to say, 'Be cool of heart and head!' Nor am I what I was. How then go back to be that which I have ceased to be? Would that I had never left it. Would that I could live again in the dreamland of the poets that we loved so well, and wander with dearest Nelly through those forest glades, peopled with the creations of Uhland, Tieck, and Chammisso. What a glorious world is theirs, and how unlike the real one!"

Thus lost in thoughts conflicting and jarring with each other—mingling the long past with the distant future—hoping and fearing—now, seeking self-persuasion, here; now, controverting her own opinions, there—she walked hurriedly on, unconscious of the time, the place, and even the rude glances bestowed upon her by many who gazed at her with an insolent admiration. What an armour is innocence! how proof against the venomed dart of malice! Kate never knew the ordeal through which she was passing. She neither saw the looks nor heard the comments of those that passed. If her mind ever turned from the throng of thoughts that oppressed it, it was when some momentary difficulty of the way recalled her to herself, for, as she escaped from the smaller streets, the crowd and crash increased, and she found herself borne along as in a strong current.

"Does this lead to the Piazza Annunziata?" asked she of a woman at a fruit-stall.

"Tell her, Giacomo," said the woman to a youth, who, with a water-melon in his hand, lay at full length on the pavement.

"*Per Baccho!* but she's handsome!" said he, holding up the paper lantern to gaze at her. And Kate hurried on in terror.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"A STREET RENCONTRE."

DY HESTER ONSLOW had passed a day of martyrdom. There was ly a single contrariety in the long catalogue of annoyances which ot fallen to her share. Her servants, habitually disciplined to per- a, had admitted every bore of her acquaintance, while, to the few ally wished to see, admittance had been denied. The rumour of an aching departure had got wind through the servants, and the hall he court-yard were crowded with creditors, duns, and begging tors of every age, and class, and country. It seemed as if every rith a petition, or a bill, an unsatisfied complaint, or an unsettled e, had given themselves a general rendezvous that morning at the rini Palace.

s well known how the most obsequious tradespeople grow peremptory passports are signed, and post-horses are harnessed. The bland ousness with which they receive "your Ladyship's orders" under- terrible change. Departure is the next thing to death. Another ry sounds like another world. The deferential bashfulness that not hint at the mention of money, now talks boldly of his debt. olvent creditor, who said always "at your own convenience," has nly a most pressing call "to make up a large sum by Saturday."

the little cajoleries and coquetries, all the little seductions and ations of trade, are given up. The invitations to buy are converted uggestions for "cash payment." It is very provoking, and very hanting! From a liberal and generous patron, you suddenly dis- yourself transformed into a dubious debtor. All the halo that has nded your taste is changed for a chill atmosphere of suspicion and st. The tradesfolk, whose respectful voices never rose above a er in the hall, now grew clamorous in the ante-chamber; and more once did they actually obtrude themselves in person within those ed precincts inhabited by Lady Hester.

hat had become of Miss Dalton?—where could she be all this while? ot Mr. Jekyl called?—what was he about that he had not "arranged" ll these "tiresome creatures?" Was there no one who knew what ? Was not Captain Onslow, even, to be found? It was quite sible that these people could be telling the truth; the greater er, if not all of them, must have been paid already, for she had

spent a world of money latterly—"somehow." Celestine was charged with a message to this effect, which had a result the very opposite to what it was intended; and now the noisy tongues and angry accents grew bolder and louder. Still none came to her rescue; and she was left alone to listen to the rebellious threatenings that murmured in the court-yard, or to read the ill-spelled impertinences of such as preferred to epistolise their complaints.

The visitors who found their way to the drawing-room had to pass through this motley and clamorous host; and, at each opening of the door, the sounds swelled loudly out.

More than once she bethought her of Sir Stafford; but shame opposed the resolution. His liberality, indeed, was boundless; and therein lay the whole difficulty. Were the matter one for discussion or angry remonstrance, she could have adventured it without a dread. She could easily have brought herself to confront a struggle, but was quite unequal to an act of submission. Among the numerous visitors who now thronged the *salons*, Lord Norwood, who had just returned from a shooting excursion in the Maremma, was the only one with whom she had anything like intimacy.

"I am but a poor counsellor in such a case," said he, laughing. "I was never dunned in my life—personally, I mean—for I always take care not to be found; and as to written applications, I know a creditor's seal and superscription as well as though I had seen him affix them. The very post-mark is peculiar."

"This levity is very unfeeling at such a moment," said Lady Hester, angrily; "and when you see me so utterly deserted, too!"

"But where's Jekyl? He ought to know how to manage this!"

"He has never been here since morning. His conduct is inexcusable!"

"And George?"

"Out the whole day!"

"And the 'Dalton?' for she has rather a good head, if I don't mistake her."

"She took the carriage into town, and has not returned."

"By Jove! I'd write a line to Sir Stafford; I'd tell him that I was going for change of air, and all that sort of thing, to Como for a week or two, and that these people were so pestering, and pressing, and all that; that, in fact, you were worried to death about it; and finding that your means were so very limited——"

"But he has been most liberal. His generosity has been without bounds."

"So much the better; he'll come down all the readier now."

"I feel shame at such a course," said she, in a weak, faint voice.

"As I don't precisely know what that sensation is, I can't advise against it; but it must needs be a very powerful emotion, if it prevent you accepting money."

"Can you think of nothing else, Norwood?"

"To be sure I can—there are twenty ways to do the thing. Close the shutters, and send for Buccellini: be ill—dangerously ill—and leave this to-morrow, at daybreak; or give a ball, like Dashwood, and start when the company are at supper. You lose the spoons and forks, to be sure; but that can't be helped. You might try and bully them, too—though perhaps it's late for *that:* and lastly—and, I believe, best of all—raise a few hundreds, and pay them each something."

"But how or where raise the money?"

"Leave that to *me*, if it must be done. The great benefactor of mankind was the fellow that invented bills. The glorious philanthropist that first devised the bright expedient of living by paper, when bullion failed, was a grand and original genius. How many a poor fellow might have been rescued from the Serpentine, by a few words scrawled over a five-shilling stamp! What a turn to a man's whole earthly career has been often given, as his pen glided over the imaginative phrase, 'I promise to pay!'"

Lady Hester paid no attention to the Viscount's moralizings. Shame—indignant shame, monopolised all her feelings.

"Well," said she, at last, "I believe it must be so. I cannot endure this any longer. Jekyl has behaved shamefully; and George I'll never forgive. They ought to have taken care of all this. And now, Norwood, to procure the money what is to be done?"

"Here's the patent treasury for pocket use—the 'Young Man's best Companion,'" said he, taking out of a black morocco-case three or four blank bill-stamps, together with a mass of acceptances of various kinds, the proceeds of various play debts, the majority of which he well knew to be valueless. "What amount will be sufficient—how much shall we draw for?" said he, seating himself, pen in hand, at the table.

"I cannot even guess," said she, trembling with embarrassment and confusion. "There are all these people's accounts and letters. I suppose they are all horrid cheats. I'm sure I never got half the things, and that the rest are already paid for. But no matter now; let us have done with them at any cost."

"'Morlandi, Coachmaker'—pretty well for Signor Morlandi!" said Norwood—"eleven hundred scudi for repairs to carriages—for destroying your patent axles, and replacing English varnish by the lacquer of a tea-tray—something less than two hundred and fifty pounds!"

"He is an obliging creature," said Lady Hester, "and always punctual."

"In that case we'll deal generously with him. He shall have half his money, if he give a receipt in full."

"'Legendre, Coiffure; eight thousand francs.' Pas mal, Monsieur Legendre!—kid gloves and perfumes, Madonna bands, and Macassar oil, are costly things to deal in."

"That is really iniquitous," said Lady Hester. "I see every bouquet is put down at a hundred francs!"

"A conservatory, at that rate, is better property than a coal-mine. Shall we say one thousand francs for this honest coiffure?"

"Impossible. He would scorn such an offer."

"Pardon me. I know these people somewhat better and longer than you do; and so far even from suffering in his estimation—if that were a matter of any consequence—you will rise in his good opinion. An Italian always despises a dupe, but entertains a sincere respect for all who detect knavery. I'll set him down for one thousand, to be increased to fifteen hundred if he'll tell me how to cut down his neighbour, Guercini."

"What of Guercini? How much is his claim?"

"A trifle; under five thousand crowns."

"Nearly one thousand pounds!" exclaimed she.

"Say, rather, eleven hundred and upwards," said Norwood.

"It is incredible how little I've had from him; a few trifling rings and brooches; some insignificant alterations and new settings; one or two little presents to Kate; and, I really believe, nothing more."

"We are getting deeper and deeper," said Norwood, turning over the bills. Contardo, the wine-merchant, and Frisani, table-decker, are both large claimants. If pine-apples were the daily food of the servants' hall, they could scarcely cut a more formidable figure in the reckoning—indeed, if the whole establishment did nothing but munch them during all their leisure hours, the score need not be greater. Do you know, Hester, that the rogueries of the Continent are a far heavier infliction than the income-tax? and that the boasted economy of a foreign residence is sensibly diminished by the unfortunate fact, that one honest tradesman is not to be found from Naples to the North Pole. They are Spartans in deceit, and only disgraced whenever the rascality is detected. Now, it is quite absurd to read such an item as this: 'Bonbons and dried fruits, three hundred and seventy crowns!' Why, if your guests were stuffed with *marrons glacées*, this would be an exaggeration."

"You are very tiresome, Norwood," said she, peevishly. "I don't want

told that these people are all knaves; their character for honesty is fair of mine; if it were, Buccellini could easily mesmerise any of them earn all his secrets. I only wish to get rid of them—it's very disng to hear their dreadful voices, and see their more dreadful selves e court beneath."

This task is somewhat more difficult than I bargained for," said rood, thoughtfully. "I fancied a few 'hundreds' would suffice, but ust read 'thousands,' instead. In any case, I'll hold a conference them, and see what can be done."

Then—do so, then, and lose no time, for I see Midchikoff's Chasseur r, and I'm sure the Prince is coming."

rwood gave her a look which made her suddenly become scarlet, then left the room without speaking.

he had not been himself a debtor with the greater number of those waited below, few could have acquitted themselves more adroitly in a mission. He was an adept in that clever game by which duns oiled and tradesmen mollified; he knew every little menace and flattery to apply to them, when to soothe and when to snub . All these arts he was both ready and willing to exercise, were it or the unpleasant difficulty that his own embarrassments rendered somewhat dubious ambassador. In fact, as he himself phrased it t was playing advocate with one leg in the dock."

lingered a little, therefore, as he went; he stopped on the landing stairs to peep out on the tumultuous assemblage beneath, like a al surveying the enemy's line before the engagement; nor was he over d to remark that little Purvis was bustling about among the crowd, book and pencil in hand, palpably taking evidence and storing up for future mention. As he was still looking, the great gate was n open with a crash, and a calèche, dirty and travel-stained, was d into the court by three steaming and panting posters. After a delay, a short, thickset figure, enveloped in travelling gear, deed, and putting, as it seemed, a few questions as to the meaning of sembled throng, entered the house.

rious to learn who, what, and whence the new arrival came, Norwood d down stairs, but all that he could learn from the postilion was, he stranger had posted from Genoa, using the greatest speed all the and never halting, save a few minutes for refreshment. The traveller ot accompanied by a servant, and his luggage bore neither name rest to give any clue as to his identity. That he was English, and e had gone direct to Sir Stafford's apartments, was the whole sum Viscount's knowledge; but even this seemed so worthy of remark,

[illegible] to Lady Hester, instead of pro-
[illegible]

She [illegible] with less interest. It might be Proctor [illegible] black-whiskered? No, he was [illegible] him fair haired. "She [illegible] It might be an English [illegible] Nice, she forgot ex- [illegible] gout or sore eyes—she [illegible] one or the other. On [illegible] because he had attended [illegible]

[illegible] would seem to be worse."

[illegible] George sat up with him the night [illegible] His mind used to wander at [illegible] he was very unhappy."

[illegible] thousand a year, unhappy!" [illegible] his head as he spoke.

[illegible] there are other considerations than [illegible] persons; and if Onslow's [illegible] compunctious regrets for his [illegible]

[illegible] Norwood, with a most laudable air of [illegible]

[illegible] Lord—very considerate and very [illegible] have fancied it was the very [illegible] entering this chamber— [illegible] daily life—beholding the re- [illegible] beguiled—not to speak of the [illegible] these features."

[illegible] you, Hester," said he, with [illegible] above eight years since [illegible]

[illegible] said she, pettishly.

[illegible] my Lady, presents his compliments," said a ser- [illegible] if your Ladyship will receive him at dinner [illegible]

[illegible] Yes—say, 'Yes, at eight o'clock,'" said she, [illegible] with impatience. "You'll stay and [illegible] Norwood; I know you're not great friends; but no matter, George is so uncertain—he left us t'other day to entertain the Prince alone—Kate and myself—only fancy; and as he takes half-hour fits of

silence, and Kate occasionally won't speak for a whole evening together, my part was a pleasant one."

"How Florence wrongs you both," said Norwood; "they say that no one is more agreeable to your Ladyship than the Midchikoff," said he, slowly and pointedly.

"As Miss Dalton's admirer—I hope rumour adds that," said she, hastily.

"What? are you really serious? Has the Dalton pretensions?"

"Perhaps not; but the Prince has," interrupted Lady Hester; "but you are forgetting these people all the while. Do pray do something—anything with them; and don't forget us at eight o'clock." And with this Lady Hester hurried from the room, as if admonished by her watch of the lateness of the hour; but really anxious to escape further interrogatory from the Viscount.

When Norwood reached the court, he was surprised to find it empty—not one of the eager creditors remained; but all was still and silent.

"What has become of these good people?" asked he of the Porter.

"The stranger who arrived in the calèche awhile ago spoke a few words to them, and they went."

This was all that he knew, and being a Porter—one of that privileged caste, whose prerogative it is never to reveal what takes place before their eyes—his present communication was remarkable.

"Would that the good genius had remembered *me* in his moment of generous abandonment!" muttered Norwood, as he took his road homeward to dress for dinner.

Little scrupulous about the means of getting out of a difficulty, provided it were only successful, Norwood scarcely bestowed another thought upon the whole matter, and lounged along the streets as forgetful of the late scene as though it had passed twenty years before.

As the Viscount strolled along towards his lodgings, Kate Dalton, with trembling limbs and palpitating heart, threaded her way through the thronged streets, now wet and slippery from a thin rain that was falling. So long as her road lay through the less-frequented thoroughfares, her appearance excited little or no attention in the passers-by; but when she entered the Piazza Santa Trinita, all a blaze with gas-lamps, and the reflected lights from brilliant shops, many stopped, turned, and gazed at the strange sight of a young and beautiful girl, attired in the very height of fashion, being alone and afoot at such an hour. Unaccountable even to mystery, as it seemed, there was something in her gait and carriage that at once repelled the possibility of a disparaging impression, and many touched or removed their hats respectfully as they made way for her to pass. To avoid the carriages, which

[illegible] every direction and at tremendous speed, she passed [illegible] the houses, and, in doing so, came within that brilliant [illegible] light that poured from the glass doors of the great Café of the [illegible]. It was exactly the hour when the idle loungers of Florence [illegible]—that [illegible] class who form the staple of our club life in England—were swarming to talk of the plans of the evening, what resources or pleasures were available, and what receptions were open. The drizzling rain, and the cold, raw feeling of the air, prevented their being seated as their custom was, before the doors, where in every attitude of graceful [illegible] they habitually smoked their cigars and discussed the passers-by, [illegible] the plenitude of recreative indolence. The group consisted of men of every age and country.

There were Princes, and blacklegs, and adventurers; some with real rank and fortune, others as destitute of character as of means. Many owned names great and renowned in history; others bore designations only chronicled in the records of criminal jurisprudence. All were well dressed, and, so far as cursory notice could detect, possessed the ease and bearing of men familiar with the habits of good society. Although mixing in very distinct circles, here, at least, they met every day on terms of familiar equality, discussing the politics of the hour and the events of the world with seeming frankness and candour.

From a small chamber at the back of the Cafe a little tide of loungers seemed to ebb and flow, while the sharp rattling sound of a dice-box indicated the nature of the occupation that went forward there. The [illegible] apartment was thronged with spectators of the game, and even [illegible] the door several were standing, content to hear the tidings of a [illegible] they could not witness.

[illegible] upon the Ponte Carraja, and chuck rouleaux of gold into the [illegible] to the full as amusing, and not a more costly pastime," [illegible] ringing voice, which, once heard, there was no difficulty in [illegible] as Haggerstone's.

"[illegible] plays well," said another.

"[illegible] luck, Sir," said the Colonel. "Let him always have [illegible] to ride, and I don't say he'll lose the saddle; but [illegible] on a donkey."

"[illegible] a Russian?" asked one.

"No, [illegible] worse; he's a Greek. I know everything about him. [illegible] was a Finlander, and the father a Cephalonian. I don't [illegible] would ask a better parentage."

"What luck! By Jove! I never saw such luck!" said a voice from [illegible] "Chukow has no chance with him."

"[illegible] if you persist in expressing your opinion in Eng-

lish," said Haggerstone. "Maraffi speaks every language, plays every game, and knows the use of every weapon, from a jereed to Joe Manton."

"I'll not test his abilities at any of them," said the other, laughing.

"*Per Baccho!* there goes something new," said a young Italian, from the window that looked into the street. "Who's she?"

"*Diantre!*" said the old Duc de Parivaux. "That is something very exquisite indeed. She was splashed by that carriage that passed, and I just saw her foot."

"She's the Prima Donna from Milan."

"She's the Cipriani. I know her figure perfectly."

"She's very like the Princesse de Raoule."

"Taller, and younger."

"And fifty times handsomer. What eyes! By Jove! I wish that drosky would never move on! She is regularly imprisoned there."

"You are very ungallant, gentlemen, I must say," said the young Count de Guilmard, the French Secretary of Legation, who, having finished his coffee and liqueur, coolly arranged his curls beneath his hat before the glass—"very ungallant indeed, not to offer an arm to an unprotected Princess. We Frenchmen understand our 'devoirs' differently." And, so saying, he passed out into the street, while the rest pressed up closer to the window to observe his proceedings.

"Cleverly done, Guilmard!" cried one. "See how he affects to have protected her from the pole of that carriage."

"She'll not notice him"—"She will"—"She has"—"She hasn't"—"She is moving his way!"—"Not at all"—"She's speaking!"—"There, I told you he'd succeed"—"But he hasn't, though." Amid all these phrases, which rattled on more rapidly than we can write them, Onslow joined the party, one heavy venture on a single card having involved him in a tremendous loss.

"Is that a countrywoman of yours, Onslow?" asked a young Russian noble. "If so, the *entente cordiale* with France seems scarcely so secure as statesmen tell us."

Onslow gave one glance through the window, and dashed into the street with a bound like the spring of a wild animal. He threw himself between Guilmard and Kate. The Frenchman lifted his cane, and the same instant he fell backwards upon the pavement, rather hurled than struck down by the strong arm of the young Guardsman. Before the lookers-on could hasten out, George had hailed a carriage, and, assisting Kate in, took his seat beside her, and drove off.

So sudden was the whole incident, and so engrossing the terror of poor Kate's mind, that she saw nothing of what passed, and was merely

conscious that by George's opportune coming she was rescued from the insolent attentions of the stranger.

"Did he speak to you? Did he dare to address you?" asked Onslow, in a voice which boiling passion rendered almost unintelligible.

"If he did, I know not," said she, as she covered her face with shame, and struggled against the emotion that almost choked her.

"He took your arm—he certainly laid hold of your hand!"

"It was all so rapid, that I can tell nothing," said she, sobbing; "and although my courage never failed me till you came, *then* I thought I should have fainted."

"But how came you alone and on foot, and at such an hour, too? Where had you been?"

These questions he put with a sort of stern resolution, that showed no evasive answer would rescue her.

"Did you leave home without a carriage, or even a servant?" asked he again, as no answer was returned to his former question.

"I did take a carriage in the morning; and—and——"

"Sent it away again," continued George, impetuously. "And where did you drive to—where pass the day?"

Kate hung her head in silence, while her heart felt as if it would burst from very agony.

"This is no idle curiosity of mine, Miss Dalton," said he, speaking with a slow and measured utterance. "The society you have mixed with here is not above any reproach, nor beneath any suspicion. I insist upon knowing where you have been, and with whom? So, then, you refuse to speak—you will not tell. If it be Lady Hester's secret——"

"No, no! The secret is mine, and mine only. I swear to you, by all we both believe in, that it has no concern with any one save myself."

"And can you not confide it to me? Have I no right to ask for the confidence, Kate?" said he, with tenderness. "Know you any one more deeply and sincerely your friend than I am—more ready to aid, protect, or counsel you?"

"But this I cannot—must not tell you," said she, in accents broken by sobbing.

"Let me know, at least, enough to refute the insolence of an imputation upon your conduct. I cannot tamely sit by and hear the slanderous stories that, to-morrow or next day, will gain currency through the town."

"I cannot—I cannot," was all that she could utter.

"If not me, then, choose some other defender. Unprotected and undefended you must not be."

"I need none, sir; none will asperse me!" said she, haughtily.

"What! you say this? while scarce five minutes since I saw you outraged—insulted in the open street."

A burst of tears, long repressed, here broke from Kate, and for some minutes her sobs alone were heard in the silence.

"I will ask but one question more, Miss Dalton," said George, slowly, as the carriage passed under the arched gateway of the Palace, "and then this incident is sealed to me for ever. Is this secret—whatever it be—in your own sole keeping; or is your confidence shared in by another?"

"It is," murmured Kate, below her breath.

"You mean that it is shared?" asked he, eagerly.

"Yes: Mr. Jekyl at least knows——"

"Jekyl!" cried George, passionately; "and is Alfred Jekyl your adviser and your confidant? Enough—you have told me quite enough," said he, dashing open the door of the carriage as it drew up at the door. He gave his hand to Kate to alight, and then, turning away, left her, without even a "good-by," while Kate hurried to her room, her heart almost breaking with agony.

"I shall be late, Nina," said she, affecting an air and voice of unconcern, as she entered her room; "you must dress me rapidly."

"Mademoiselle must have been too pleasantly engaged to remember the hour," said the other, with an easy pertness quite different from her ordinary manner. More struck by the tone than by the words themselves, Kate turned a look of surprise on the speaker.

"It is so easy to forget oneself at Morlache's, they say," added the girl, with a saucy smile; and although stung by the impertinence, Kate took no notice of the speech. "Mademoiselle will of course never wear that dress again," said Nina, as she contemptuously threw from her the mud-stained and rain-spotted dress she had worn that morning. "We have a Basque proverb, Mademoiselle, about those who go out in a carriage and come back on foot."

"Nina, what do you mean by these strange words, and this still more strange manner?" asked Kate, with a haughtiness she had never before assumed towards the girl.

"I do not pretend to say that Mademoiselle has not the right to choose her confidants, but the Principessa de San Martello and the Duchessa di Rivoli did not think me beneath their notice."

"Nina, you are more unintelligible than ever," cried Kate, who still, through all the dark mystery of her words, saw the lowering storm of coming peril.

"I may speak too plainly—too bluntly, Mademoiselle, but I can scarcely be reproached with equivocating; and I repeat, that my former

mistresses honoured me with their secret confidence, and they did wisely, too, for I should have discovered everything of myself, and my discretion would not have been fettered by a compact."

"But if I have no secrets," said Kate, drawing herself up with proud disdain, "and if I have no need either of the counsels or the discretion of my waiting-woman?"

"In that case," said Nina, quietly, "Mademoiselle has only perilled herself for nothing. The young lady who leaves her carriage and her maid to pass three hours at Morlache's, and returns thence, on foot, after nightfall, may truly say she has no secrets—at least so far as the city of Florence is concerned."

"This is insolence that you never permitted yourself before," said Kate, passionately.

"And yet, if I were Mademoiselle's friend instead of her servant, I should counsel her to bear it."

"But I will not," cried Kate, indignantly. "Lady Hester shall know of your conduct this very instant."

"One moment, Mademoiselle; just one moment," said Nina, interposing herself between Kate and the door. "My tongue is oftentimes too ready, and I say things for which I am deeply sorry afterwards; forgive me, I beg and beseech you, if I have offended; reject my counsels, disdain my assistance, if you will, but do not endanger yourself in an instant of anger. If you have but little control over your temper, *I* have even less over mine; pass out of that door as my enemy, and I am yours to the last hour of my life."

There was a strange and almost incongruous mixture of feeling in the way she uttered these words; at one moment abject in submission, and at the next hurling a defiance as haughty as though she were an injured equal. The conflict of the girl's passion, which first flushed, now left her pale as death, and trembling in every limb. Her emotion bespoke the most intense feeling, and Kate stood like one spell-bound before her. Her anger had already passed away, and she looked with almost a sense of compassion at the excited features and heaving bosom of the Spanish girl.

"You wrong yourself and me, too, Nina," said Kate Dalton, at last. "I have every trust in your fidelity, but I have no occasion to test it."

"Be it so, Mademoiselle," replied the other, with a curtsey.

"Then all is forgotten," said Kate, affecting a gaiety she could not feel; "and now let me hasten down stairs, for I am already late."

"The Prince will have thought it an hour, Mademoiselle," said the girl; the quiet demureness of her manner depriving the words of any semblance of impertinence. If Kate looked gravely, perhaps some little

secret source of pleasure lay hid within her heart, and in the glance she gave at her glass, there was an air of conscious triumph that did not escape the lynx-eyed Nina.

"My lady is waiting dinner, Miss Dalton," said a servant, as he tapped at the door; and Kate, with many a trouble warring in her breast, hastened down stairs, in all the pride of a loveliness that never was more conspicuous.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"PROPOSALS."

KATE found Lady Hester, the Prince, and Mr. Jekyl awaiting her as she entered the drawing-room, all looking even more bored and out of sorts than people usually do who have been kept waiting for their dinner.

"Everybody has sworn to be as tiresome and disagreeable as possible to-day," said Lady Hester. "George said he'd dine here, and is not coming; Lord Norwood promised, and now writes me word that an unavoidable delay detains him; and here comes Miss Dalton—the mirror of punctuality when all else are late—a full half-hour after the time. There, dear—no excuses nor explanations about all you have been doing—the thousand calls you've made, and shops you've ransacked. I'm certain you've had a miserable day of it."

Kate blushed deeply, and dreaded to meet Jekyl's eye; but when she did, that little glassy orb was as blandly meaningless as any that ever rattled in the head of a Dutch doll. Even as he gave his arm to lead her in to dine, nothing in his manner or look betrayed anything like a secret understanding between them. A bystander might have deemed him a new acquaintance.

"Petits diners" have, generally, the prerogative of agreeability—they are the chosen reunions of a few intimates, who would not dilute their pleasantry even by a single bore. They are also the bright occasions for those little culinary triumphs which never can be attempted in a wider sphere. Epigrams, whether of lamb or language, require a select and special jury to try them; but just in the same proportion as the success of such small parties is greater, so is their utter failure when by any mischance there happens a break down in the good spirits or good humour of the company.

We have said enough to show that the ladies, at least, might be

excused for not displaying those thousand attractions of conversation which all centre on the one great quality—ease of mind. The Prince was more than usually out of sorts, a number of irritating circumstances having occurred to him during the morning. A great Sovereign—on whom he had lavished the most profuse attentions—had written him a letter of thanks, through his private secretary, enclosing a snuff-box, instead of sending him an autograph, and the first class of the national order. His glover, in Paris, had forgotten to make his right hand larger than the left, and a huge packet that had just arrived was consequently useless. His *chef* had eked out a salmi of ortolans by a thrush, and it was exactly that unlucky morsel the Cardinal had helped himself to at breakfast, and immediately sent his plate away in disappointment. Rubion, too, his ninth secretary, had flatly refused to marry a little *danseuse* that had just come out in the ballet—a piece of insolence and rebellion on his part not to be tolerated; and when we add to these griefs an uncomfortable neckcloth, and the tidings of an insurrection in a Russian province where he owned immense property in mines, his state of irritability may be leniently considered.

Jekyl, if truth were told, had as many troubles of his own to confront as any of the rest. If the ocean he sailed in was not a great Atlantic—his bark was still but a cockle-shell—his course in life required consummate skill and cleverness, and yet never could be safe even with that. Notwithstanding all this, he alone was easy, natural, and agreeable—not as many an inferior artist would have been agreeable, by any over-effort to compensate for the lack of co-operation in others, and thus make their silence and constraint but more palpable—his pleasantry was tinged with the tone of the company, and all his little smartnesses were rather insinuated than spoken. Quite satisfied if the Prince listened, or Lady Hester smiled—more than rewarded when they once both laughed at one of his sallies—he rattled on about the court and the town talk, the little scandals of daily history, and the petty defections of those dear friends they nightly invited to their houses. While thus, as it were, devoting himself to the amusement of the others, his real occupation was an intense study of their thoughts, what was uppermost in their minds, and in what train their speculations were following. He had long suspected the Prince of being attracted by Kate Dalton—now he was certain of it. Accustomed almost from childhood to be flattered on every hand, and to receive the blandest smiles of beauty everywhere, Midchikoff's native distrust armed him strongly against such seductions, and had Kate followed the path of others, and exerted herself to please him, her failure would have been certain. It was her actual indifference—her perfect carelessness on the subject—was the charm to his eyes,

and he felt it quite a new and agreeable sensation not to be made love to.

Too proud of her own Dalton blood to feel any elevation by the marked notice of the great Russian, she merely accorded him so much of her favour as his personal agreeability seemed to warrant; perhaps no designed flattery could have been so successful! Another feeling, also, enhanced his admiration of her. It was a part of that barbaric instinct which seemed to sway all his actions, to desire the possession of whatever was *unique* in life. Those forms or fancies of which nature stamps but one, and breaks the die—these were a passion with him. To possess a bluer turquoise than any King or Kaiser,—to own an Arab of some colour never seen before,—to have a picture by some artist who never painted but one; but whether it were a gem, a vase, a weapon, a diamond, or a dog, its value had but one test—that it had none its exact equal. Now, Kate Dalton realised these conditions more than any one he had ever met. Her very beauty was peculiar; combining, with much of feminine softness and delicacy, a degree of determination and vigour of character, that to Midchikoff smacked of queenly domination. There was a species of *fierté* about her that distinguished her among other women. All that he had seen done by an illustrious title and a diamond tiara, she seemed capable of effecting in the simplest costume and without an effort. All these were wonderful attractions to his eyes; and if he did not fall in love, it was simply because he did not know how. He, however, did what to him served as substitute for the passion; he coveted an object which should form one of the greatest rarities of his collection, and the possession of whom would give him another title to that envy—the most delicious tribute the world could render him.

There were some drawbacks to his admiration; her birth was not sufficiently illustrious; his own origin was too recent to make an alliance of this kind desirable, and he wished that she had been a Princess,—even "*à main gauche*" of some Royal House. Jekyl had done his best, by sundry allusions to Irish greatness, and the blood of various monarchs of Munster and Connaught, in times past; but the Prince was incredulous as to Hibernian greatness; probably the remembrance of an Irish diamond, once offered him for sale, had tinged his mind with this sense of disparagement as to all Irish magnificence. Still Kate rose above every detracting influence, and he thought of the pride in which he should parade her through Europe as his own.

Had she been a barb, or a bracelet, an antique cup, or a Sevres jar, he never would have hesitated about the acquisition. Marriage, however, was a more solemn engagement; and he did not quite fancy any purchase that cost more than mere money. Nothing but the possibility

[illegible] this cautious scruple; and [illegible] "George Onslow's [illegible] and although up to this Miss [illegible] who could tell what time [illegible] was Norwood, too, with the [illegible] how an ambitious girl [illegible] Prince had no time to [illegible] his tastes than what [illegible] this occasion.

[illegible] of the company. [illegible] and unconnected for [illegible] was discursive. An [illegible] mention of their [illegible] to Como and its [illegible] whose functions [illegible] pauses would [illegible] more congenial than [illegible] the complex [illegible] filled Midchikoff's [illegible] towards Kate,—the [illegible] him while [illegible] every accent and [illegible] passing within him. [illegible] a less degree. [illegible] he well knew how [illegible] would rouse him [illegible]

[illegible] when Lord [illegible] to [illegible] led [illegible]

[illegible] of the [illegible] has been a *fracas* [illegible] a time. [illegible] knocked [illegible] meet to-morrow [illegible] one [illegible] the first shot in [illegible]

[illegible] of the Peace Congress. [illegible] more heartily. It [illegible] barred general intercourse,

and often closed up for a whole season the pleasantest houses of a town. The announcement of a strict blockade never struck a mercantile community with more terror. To Norwood, the prospect was directly the opposite. Not only an adept in all the etiquette and ceremonial of such meetings, he liked to see his name circulated in these affairs, as a kind of guarantee of his readiness to seek a similar reparation for injury. He had trusted for many a year on his dexterity at twelve paces, and he never missed an opportunity of sustaining the "prestige" of a "dead shot."

It was, then, with an ardour of amateurship that he narrated the various little preliminary steps which had already been taken. Merkheim, the Austrian Secretary, had called on him, on the part of Guilmard; and as, in a case so clear, there was little to arrange, the only difficulty lay in the choice of weapons.

"The Frenchman claims the sword," said Norwood; "and it is always awkward to decline that proposition for a soldier. But I suppose George has about as much chance with one weapon as the other?"

"You think he'll kill him, my Lord?"

"I think so. If the offence had been less flagrant or less public, possibly not. But a blow!—to be struck down in the open street! I don't see how he can do less."

"What a break-up it will cause here!" said Jekyl, with a nod of his head in the direction of the drawing-room.

"It will send them all back to England, I suppose?"

"I suppose it will," added Jekyl, mournfully.

"What a bore! It's particularly unpleasant for me, for I hold some half dozen of George's acceptances, not due yet; and, of course, the Governor will never think of acquitting them."

"I conclude it is inevitable—the meeting, I mean?" said Jekyl.

"To be sure it is. Onslow took care of that! By the way, Jekyl, how came she there at such an hour, and alone, too?"

"She had been shopping, I fancy, and missed the carriage. There was some blunder, I have heard, about the coachman drawing up at the wrong door."

"No go, Master Jekyl. Don't try it on with me, old fellow. You know all about it, if you like to tell."

"I assure you, my Lord, you give me a credit I don't deserve."

"You know the whole story from beginning to end, Jekyl. I'd back you against the field, my boy."

The other shook his head with an air of supreme innocence.

"Then George knows it?" added Norwood, half asserting, half asking the question.

"He may, my Lord, for aught I can tell."

"If so, he's treating me unfairly," said Norwood, rising and pacing the room. "As his friend in this affair, there should be no reserve or concealment with me. You can surely say that much, Jekyl, eh? What a close fellow you are!"

"It is so easy not to blab when one has nothing to tell," said Jekyl, smiling.

"Come, there is something you *can* tell me. Where does that small corridor behind George's apartment lead to? There is a door at the end of it, and, I fancy, a stair beyond it."

"That, if I mistake not, leads up towards Lady Hester— No, I remember now; it leads to Miss Dalton's room."

"Just so; I could have sworn it."

"Why so, my Lord?" asked Jekyl, whose curiosity was now excited to the utmost.

"That's *my* secret, Master Jekyl."

"But the door is always locked and bolted from within," said Jekyl, "and there is no keyhole on the outside."

"I'll not stand pumping, Jekyl. If you had been frank with me, perhaps I should have been as open with *you*."

For an instant Jekyl hesitated what course to follow. It might be that Norwood really knew something of great importance. It might be that his discovery was valueless. And yet, if it concerned Kate in any way, the information would be all important, his great game being to make her a Princess, and yet preserve such an ascendancy over her as would render her his own slave.

"She's a strange girl that Dalton," said Norwood. "I wish she had about forty thousand pounds."

"She may have more than that yet, my Lord," said Jekyl, dryly.

"How do you mean, Jekyl. Is there any truth in that story about the Irish property? Has she really a claim on the estate? Tell me all you know, old fellow, and I'll be on the square with you throughout."

Jekyl, who in his remark had darkly alluded to the prospect of Kate's marriage with Midchikoff, now saw that Norwood had totally misconceived his meaning, and, like a shrewd tactician, determined to profit by the blunder.

"Come, Jekyl, be frank and aboveboard. What *are* her prospects?"

"Better than I have told you, my Lord," replied he, coolly. "If I cannot—for I am not at liberty to explain why—I am quite ready to pledge my word of honour to the truth of what I say, or, what your Lordship will think more of, to back my opinion by a bet."

"By Jove! that *is* news!" said the Viscount, leaning his head on the chimney to reflect. "You are such a slippery dog, Master Jekyl, you have so many turnings and windings in you, one is never quite sure with you; but supposing now, for argument's sake, that one thought of making this fair damsel a Peeress, is there no hitch in the affair—no screw loose that one ought to look to?"

"In her birth, my Lord?"

"No; d—n her birth. I mean about the tin."

"I believe, my Lord, that I can save you all speculation on the subject, when I say that pursuit would be hopeless there. The Midchikoff has gained the start, and must win in a canter."

"That Tartar fellow! nonsense, man; I know better than that. He'll never marry anything under royalty; the fellow's mother was a serf, and he must wash that spot out of his blood whenever he can."

"You are mistaken, my Lord. He only waits to be certain of being accepted, to offer himself."

"Refuse him!" said Norwood, laughing; "there's not that girl in Europe would refuse him. If every decoration he wore on his breast were a stripe of the knout upon his back, his wealth would cover all."

"The Prince would give half his fortune to be assured of all you say, my Lord," said Jekyl, gravely.

"By Jove! one might make a good thing of it, even that way," said Norwood, half aloud. "I say, Jekyl," added he, louder, "how much are you to have?—nay, nay, man, there's no impertinence in the question, we are both too much men of the world for that. It's quite clear that this is *your* scheme. Now, what's the damage?"

"My Lord, you are as flattering to my abilities as unjust to my character."

"We'll suppose all that said," broke in Norwood, impatiently; "and now we come back to the original question—whether I cannot afford to be as liberal as the Russian. Only be explicit, and let us understand each other."

"My Lord, I will not insult myself by believing I comprehend you," said Jekyl, calmly.

And before Norwood could detain him he left the room.

"Jekyl, come back, man! just hear me out—you've mistaken me! Confound the cur," muttered the Viscount, "with his hypocritical affectation,—as if I did not know his *metier* as well as I know my bootmaker's."

Norwood walked noiselessly to the door of the *salon* and peeped in.

Lady Hester, the Prince, and Jekyl, were in earnest conversation in one quarter, while Kate sat apart, apparently engaged with her embroidery-frame, but, in reality, too deeply sunk in thought to notice the bright tints before her. Norwood entered listlessly, and strolling across the room, took a place beside her. She moved slightly as he drew forward his chair, and then, as she drew back her flounce, Norwood saw that it was of deep black lace. He coolly took out his pocket-book, wherein he had deposited the torn fragment, and regarding it with attention, saw that it perfectly corresponded with the dress. So leisurely, and with such circumspection did he proceed, that several minutes elapsed before he looked up.

"You are meditative, my Lord, to-night," said Kate, at last, making an effort to relieve an awkward situation; "what are you thinking of, pray?"

"Admiring your dress, Miss Dalton, which strikes me as singularly beautiful and becoming."

"Great praise this, from such an acknowledged judge as Lord Norwood," said she, smiling.

"I prefer it to antique lace, which in general is too heavy and cumbrous for my taste; I like these fine and delicate tissues, so frail and gossamer-like—not but their frailty, like all other frailty, incurs occasionally a heavy penalty; as here, for instance, you see, this has been torn."

"So it has," said Kate, with confusion, "and I never noticed it. What a quick eye you must have, my Lord."

"And a sharp ear too, Miss Dalton," said he, significantly; "in fact, I am one of those people whose every-day faculties do duty for what in others goes by the name of cleverness. It's a great pity," said he, looking down at the dress; "you see, Miss Dalton, what a false step can do."

"And yet I cannot remember when this occurred," said she, assuming to misunderstand his equivocal expression.

"Not recal it—not a clue to the mishap?" asked he, shrewdly.

"None," said she, blushing at the pertinacity with which he clung to the theme; "but it's of no consequence."

"Would Miss Dalton think it very singular if I should be able to assist her memory? Would she accept the service as kindly as it was proffered, too?"

"Really, my Lord, you begin to speak in riddles," said she, more [illegible] at his persistance.

[illegible] he, following out the thread of his own thoughts. [illegible] safe a counsellor as Alfred Jekyl."

ew deadly pale, but never replied to this speech.
ertainly," resumed he, "the man who speaks in his own name
r take precedence of an envoy."
ord," said she, firmly, "the very little which I can understand
ords, implies a pretension to knowledge and influence over me,
sdain to accept; but still I cannot believe that you seriously
sult me."
urse not," said he; "I have come on a very different errand.
assingly allude to bygones, it was to show you that you can
e candid when I am frank. We too, united, would walk over
, and no mistake—that's what I was coming to. I don't
y that the Russian is not richer—eh, gad! there's no disputing
, as to rank, a Peer of Great Britain, I take it, is the equal of
Not to remind you of the old adage about 'a bird in the
speak frankly, because you are your own mistress."
if Lord Norwood will excuse you, come to me for one instant,"
Hester.
ay yes, before you go—or, if not yes, tell me that I have
hope," whispered Norwood; but she arose without speaking.
stand a 'hedge,' by Jove!" said Norwood, sulkily; "play or
ing else for me."
me to pass you, my Lord," said Kate, courteously.
ord—off or on—Miss Dalton," said he, rising, and affecting to
while he still barred the passage. A proud, disdainful smile
reply she vouchsafed.
ht," said he, insolently; "only remember how we stand, Miss
d whenever you want to repair the mischance of your lace
m't forget the piece is in my keeping;" and he opened the
k as he spoke, and exhibited the fragment before her. Sick
or she could neither explain nor realise, she lay back again in
mable to move, while Norwood glided quietly away and left

Kate, have you forgotten me all this time," said Lady Hester,
e now perceived was alone on the sofa; Midchikoff and Jekyl
red into an adjoining gallery, where they walked slowly along
e, deep in conversation.
houldn't have suffered Norwood to engross your attention in
er, my dear. The Prince has been quite put out by it, and at
ment, too,—and how flushed you are. What has he been

scarcely remember," said Kate, confusedly.
it's of no consequence, dear, because I have got something to

[illegible] Kate, how [illegible] died [illegible] I [illegible] days.' [illegible] Irish [illegible] there's [illegible] rose-water [illegible] I can [illegible] apart. [illegible] Buccellini [illegible] It was [illegible] mentioned [illegible] of my whole [illegible]

[illegible] we all think too [illegible] what I see in society. It [illegible] her seat when the [illegible] for it afterwards. [illegible] Protestants would only [illegible] their keeping their chairs.' [illegible] and well turned—wasn't it? Of

, then, you'll make no obstacle about the Greek Church, which I
is exactly like your own, only that the Priest has a beard, which
k more becoming. It looks affectionate, too; it always gives one
ea of devotion, a girl changing her faith for her husband; and
in this tiresome age we live in, a new religion is the only new
one ever hears of. Your excellent family—that sweet sister, and
ar old Papa—will probably make a fuss about it; but you know,
ll, how absurd that is; and if you were to marry a Chinese,
no saying what strange creatures you'd have to pray to. You'll
o go to Russia, but only for presentation; that over, the Prince
tain a renewal of his permission to reside abroad; still, if you
o pass a winter at St. Petersburgh, it will he far from disagreeable.
omen are too fond of caviar and high play; but they dress just
l as in Paris, and wear better diamonds. Midchikoff's jewels are
alled; and, now that I think of it, there's one thing I've set my
on, and you must positively promise to give me,—a little stiletto
n emerald hilt and handle. I have pined for it—there's no other
-these three years. He wore it in London, and I have never had
of my thoughts since. You can afford to be very generous,
t. How I envy you that pleasure! and the delight you'll feel in
ing for poor Papa and Mary—no, Elizabeth, I mean; how absurd,
ld say, Ellen. It was something about that tale of Elizabeth,
ile of Siberia, was running in my mind. The Prince will do
ver you suggest, and, indeed, he has already hinted about your
r Frank joining the Russian service. He'll have him named an
in the Emperor's Guard. You must insist, too, upon La Rocca
your own—settled upon yourself. They tell me it's the sweetest
the world; and I'll always live there when you don't want it.
ion this about the settlement, because there's no saying how men
have. I'm sure I never could have anticipated such a return as
met with from Sir Stafford. And then, you know, with a Russian,
must be too guarded. Don't you agree with me? Well, never
you'll perhaps come round to my opinion later. But here comes
nce, and it will be as well you should retire, dearest. I'll see

regular T—T—Tartar, she is, and almost boxed my ears for looking into a small case where my lady's r—ringlets are kept; ha! ha! ha! I saw them, though—two long and two short, and a pl—pl—plait for the back of the head. How she m—m—makes up at night!"

"I must say that you have the strangest mode of requiting hospitality," said Kate, haughtily.

"It's all very well to talk of hospi—hospi—hospi—" Here a fit of gaping brought on coughing, which, after a violent struggle, ended in the forced utterance of the last syllable of the word, but with such fatigue and exhaustion that he seemed scarcely able to continue; at last, however, he did resume. "It's all very well to talk of that, but we got in here by our own cl—cl—cleverness; at least by Zoe's."

"Less good-natured persons would find another word for it, Mr Purvis."

"So they would. Haggerstone called it a Ricketty stratagem. No matter; *we're* in—ha! ha! ha!—and *he's* out. The pr—pr—proof of the pu—pu—pudding——"

"Will you excuse me, Sir, if I say I must leave you?"

"Don't go, don't go; I've something very important to—to tell you. And first, Zoe—my sister Zoe—wants to see you. The cook has been most im—im—impertinent to her. She says it was ginger he put in the macca—macca—macca—roni, instead of P—P—Parmesan; all his truffles are only Piedmontese. That isn't all: don't be in such a h—hurry. They've changed the wine, too. We had Ch—Ch—Chambertin yesterday, and they've given us P—Pomard to-day. How is that to be borne?"

"I really see but one remedy for it, Sir," said Kate, scornfully.

"So Zoe said; that's exactly her opinion. They must be sent away. Zoe knows a very ti—ti—tidy cook. He's not a—a top-sawyer, you know, but he can r—roast a bit of beef, and makes a c—capital rice-pudding, and he'll come for six dollars a month. Wouldn't that be a sa—saving? Zoe told him to c—call to-day, and speak to La—Lady Hester."

"He will find that difficult, Sir," said Kate, dryly.

"And as for the b—butler, such a J—J—Jack-a-napes I never saw; and Zoe would advise you to take little Pierretto—the fellow you see every day at the Pergola; he sells the tickets outside the door. He looks r—r—ragged enough now, but when he's dressed——"

"You must see, Sir," interposed Kate, "that these are all details in which it would be both indelicate and impertinent for me to intrude an opinion about."

"Not when you li—live in the house; not when you're dome—dome—domesticated with the family. We're all in the same bo—boat now

and Zoe says somebody must steer it. Now Lizetta, Zoe's maid, would keep the k—keys herself."

"Pray remember, Sir, this is Lady Hester Onslow's house."

"Egad! it w—won't be long so, if she goes on as she's d—doing. Martha saw the meat-cart come in this morning, and I had a p—p—peep into the servants' hall when the fl—flunkies were feeding, and such w—w—waste, such re—reckless——"

"Good evening, Mr. Purvis; I cannot stay longer," said Kate. And, before he could interpose a word, she hastend from the spot, and, passing rapidly up the stairs, gained her own room, leaving Purvis to bethink him over the mass of things he had not touched upon, and on which he had mainly intended to debate.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AN ARRIVAL.

Let us go back a few hours in our history, and follow the short and burly figure which, emerging from the travelling-carriage in the court-yard of the Palace, pushed his way through the noisy throng of duns, and entered the house.

"How are you Proctor—how is your master?" said he, as he threw off his great-coat, and unrolled a capacious muffler from his throat. "How is Sir Stafford?"

"Oh, Doctor Grounsell, glad you've come, Sir. It will be a real pleasure to my master to see you again, Sir."

"How is he, man—how's the gout?"

"Poorly—very poorly, Sir. Things have gone badly here, Doctor, since you left us," said he, with a sigh.

"Yes, yes; I know it all; I have heard all about that. But his health—tell me of his health?"

"Greatly broken, Sir. No sleep o' nights without opium, and no real rest even with that."

"And his spirits?"

"Broken, too, Sir. He's not what you remember him, Sir, nor anything like it. No pleasant joke, Sir, when anything goes amiss, as it used to be; no turning it off with his merry laugh! He's fretful and impatient about the merest trifles; and he that never wanted attendance,

is now always complaining that he's neglected, and deserted, and forsaken by all the world."

"Does the Captain come often to see and sit with him?"

"Every day, Sir; but these visits do rather harm than good. Sir Stafford is vexed at what goes on in the house; and Master George—I don't know how it is—but he don't calm him down, and they have oftentimes angry words together; not but my master is frequently in the wrong, and taxes the young gentleman with what he can't help; for, you see, Sir, my Lady——"

"D—n ——! I mean, tell me about Sir Stafford; it is of him I want to hear. Does he read?"

"He makes me read to him every day, Sir, all about the money-market and railroad shares; sometimes twice over, indeed; and when I ask if he wouldn't like to hear about what goes on in politics, he always says, 'No, Proctor, let's have the City article again.'"

"And his letters—doesn't he read them?"

"The Captain reads them for him, Sir; and now and then writes the answers, for he can't hold a pen himself! Oh, you'll not know him when you see him! He that was so large and fine a man, I lift him in and out of bed as if he were a baby."

"Has he no acquaintance here?"

"None, Sir."

"Are there no inquiries after his health?"

"Yes, Sir; there's plenty of people he used to give money to when he was up and about—poor actors, and painters, and the like—they come every day to know how he is. Some of them leave begging letters, which I never give him; but most go away without a word."

"And his countrymen here: are there none who ask after him?"

"No, Sir. The only English we ever see visit my Lady, and never come to this side of the house at all."

"Does Miss Dalton come to inquire for him?"

"Every morning, and every night, too, Sir. I suppose it must be without my Lady's orders, or even knowledge; for once, when Sir Stafford was sitting up in his dressing-room, and I asked her if she wouldn't like to come in and sit a few minutes with him, she turned away without speaking; and I saw, from her manner, that she was crying."

"What are all these people outside—who are they?"

"My Lady's tradespeople, Sir. They've heard she's going for a few weeks to Como, and they've come with all their bills, as if she were a runaway."

"Go and tell them to leave this—send them away, Proctor. It would do your master great injury were he to overhear them. So

that everything shall be paid in a day or two; that Sir Stafford remains here, and is responsible for all."

Proctor hastened out on his errand; and the Doctor sat down and covered his face with his hands.

"Poor Stafford! is all your trustful affection come to this? Is it thus that your unbounded generosity, your noble hospitality are requited?"

When Proctor returned, he proceeded to detail, for the Doctor's information, the various events which had occurred during his absence. With most, Grounsell was already acquainted, and listened to the particulars without surprise or emotion.

"So it is—so it is," muttered he to himself; "there may be more cant of virtue, a greater share of hypocrisy in our English morals, but, assuredly, these things do not happen with us as we see them here. There would seem a something enervating in the very air of the land, that a man like him should have sunk down into this besotted apathy! When can I see him, Proctor?"

"He's dozing just now, Sir; but about midnight he wakes up, and asks for his draught. If that won't be too late for you——"

"Too late for me! Why, what else have I travelled for, night and day, without intermission? Be cautious, however, about how you announce me; perhaps it would be better I should see the Captain first."

"You'll scarcely find him at home, Sir, at this hour; he generally comes in between three and four."

"Show me to his room. I'll write a few lines for him in case we don't meet."

Proctor accompanied the Doctor across the court-yard, and, guiding him up a small stair, reached the terrace off which George Onslow's apartment opened. The window-shutters of the room were not closed, nor the curtains drawn; and in the bright light of several candles that shone within, Grounsell saw two figures seated at a table, and busily engaged in examining the details of a case of pistols which lay before them.

"That will do, Proctor," said Grounsell; "you may leave me now. I'll be with you at twelve." And thus saying, he gently pushed him towards the door of the terrace, which he closed and bolted after him, and then noiselessly returned to his former place.

There were few things less congenial to Grounsell's nature than playing the spy. It was a part he thoroughly detested; nor did he think that it admitted of defence or palliation; still, the whole habit of his mind through life had impressed him with a disparaging opinion of himself. The limited sphere of his duties, the humble routine of his

daily walk, and the very few friendships he had inspired, all tended to increase this impression, till at last he looked upon himself as one who could only be useful by the sacrifice of personal feeling and the abnegation of all self-esteem; and thus he would have declined to know another man for what he deemed of no consequence in himself. His fault was not thinking too well of others, but thinking too meanly of himself.

The scene before him now was enough to suggest deep anxiety. Notes and letters littered the floor and the table; the embers of a large fire of papers lay on the hearth; open drawers and boxes stood on every side; all betokening preparation, the object of which the pistol-case sufficiently indicated. As they sat with their backs to the window, Grounsell could not recognise the figures; but the voice of one proclaimed him to be George Onslow.

"And where is this place—on the way to Arezzo?" asked he.

"No; on the opposite side of the city, off the high road to Bologna. It is a little park, surrounding a summer palace of the Grand Duke, they call Pratolino," said the other. "They all agree that it is the best spot to be found; no molestation, nor interference of any kind; and a capital breakfast of fresh trout to be had at the inn."

"An interesting consideration for such as have good appetites," said Onslow, laughing.

"I never saw a Frenchman who had not, on such an occasion," rejoined the other, snapping the pistol, as he spoke. "I like these straight stocks; you are almost always certain of your man, with a stiff arm and a low aim."

"I don't know that I've forgotten anything, Norwood," said Onslow, rising and pacing the room with folded arms.

"You've written to the Governor?"

"Yes; and mentioned those acceptances," said Onslow, with a sneering severity that the other never seemed to notice. "You're quite safe, whatever happens."

"Hang it, man, I wasn't thinking of that; curse the money, it never entered my thoughts."

"My father will pay it," said George, dryly, and continued his walk.

"As you have alluded to it, I hope you spoke of it as a loan—anything like a play transaction suggests a mess of scandal and stories."

"I have called it a debt, and that is quite sufficient."

"All right—whatever you like. And now about this girl. Do you intend to let this mystery continue, or do you think that, under the circumstances, Lady Hester should still retain her as a friend and companion?"

now of nothing to her disparagement, nor have I yet met one
t. That there are circumstances which she does not deem fitting
it to my keeping is no just cause of allegation against her."
ı are very honourable to say so, George; but I must confess, it
than she deserves at your hands."
r do you mean?"
it she means to take the Russian—that's all."
ll, and why not? Would not such a match be a brilliant one
l of much higher rank and pretension?"
at's the use of all this fencing, man?" said Norwood, half
"*I* know better how matters stand. Do you remember the
ou lost so heavily at Macao? Well, I was lying stretched on
, yonder, by the light of the fire only, when the door opened,
stepped gently in."
at, Kate Dalton?"
, Kate Dalton. Oh! impossible if you like—deny it as much
please, but *she* has not equal hardihood, that I can tell you;
she had, here is the proof that could condemn her—this frag-
her lace flounce was caught in the door as she banged it in
ape; and this very evening I compared it with the dress in
; aye, and showed her the rent from which it came."
e did George compel Norwood to repeat over this story; and
down, overwhelmed with sorrow and shame.
ı swear to me, then, Onslow, that you never saw her here—
new of her coming?" said he, after a long silence between

ver, I swear!" said the other, solemnly.
en, some other is the fortunate man, that's all. How good if it
urn out to be Jekyl!" And he laughed heartily at the absurdity
onceit.
more of this," said Onslow, passionately. "The tone of the
we live in here would seem to warrant any, or every imputa-
n on those whose lives are spotless; and I know of no greater
tion than the facility of our belief in them. In this instance,
, my conscience is at ease; and I reject, with contempt, the pos-
f a stain upon that girl's honour."
sentiment does more credit to your chivalry than your shrewd-
orge," said the Viscount, sarcastically. "But, as you are about
your life on the issue, I cannot impugn your sincerity."
sty movement of George towards the window here alarmed
ll, and he noiselessly withdrew, and descended the stairs again.

"A precious mess of trouble do I find ready for me," muttered he, as he passed across the court-yard. "Debt, duelling, and sickness,—such are the pleasures that welcome me: and these not the worst, perhaps, if the causes of them were to be made known!"

"My Lady has just heard of your arrival, Doctor, and begs you will have the kindness to step up to her room," said Proctor, coming to meet him.

"I'm tired—I'm fatigued. Say I'm in bed," said Grounsell, angrily.

"Her maid has just seen you, Sir," suggested Proctor, mildly.

"No matter; give the answer I tell you—or, stay—perhaps it would be better to see her. Yes, Proctor, show me the way." And muttering to himself, "The meeting will not be a whit pleasanter for *her* than *me*," he followed the servant up the stairs.

Well habituated to Lady Hester's extravagant and costly tastes, Grounsell was yet unprepared for the gorgeous decorations and splendid ornaments of the chambers through which he passed, and he stopped from time to time, in amazement, to contemplate a magnificence which was probably rather heightened than diminished by the uncertain light of the candles the servant carried. He peered at the china vases; he passed his hand across the malachite and jasper tables; he narrowly inspected the rich mosaics, as though doubtful of their being genuine; and then, with a deep sigh—almost deep enough to be a groan—he moved on in sadness. A bust of Kate Dalton, the work of a great sculptor, and an admirable likeness, caught his eye, and he gazed at it with signs of strong emotion. There was much beauty in it, and of a character all her own; but still the cold marble had caught up, in traits sterner than those of life, the ambitious bearing of the head, and the proud elevation of the brow.

"And she has become this already!" said he, half aloud. "Oh, how unlike poor Nelly's model!—how different from the simple and beauteous innocence of those saint-like features!"

"My Lady will see you, Sir," said Celestine, breaking in upon his musings. And he followed her into the chamber, where, seated in a deeply-cushioned chair, Lady Hester reclined, dressed in all the perfection of an elegant *deshabille*.

Grounsell was, assuredly, not the man to be most taken by such attractions; yet he could not remain entirely insensible to them; and he felt a most awkward sense of admiration as he surveyed her. With all a woman's quickness, her Ladyship saw the effect she had produced, and languidly extending her hand, she vouchsafed the nearest approach to a smile with which she had ever favoured him. As if suddenly recalling

his old antipathies and prejudices, Grounsell was himself in a moment, d, scarcely touching the taper and jewelled fingers, he bowed ceremiously, and took his seat at a little distance off.

"This is a very unexpected pleasure indeed," sighed Lady Hester; you only arrived to-night?"

"Half an hour ago, Madam; and but for your Ladyship's summons should have been in bed."

"How do you find Sir Stafford looking—poorly, I fear?"

"I hav'n't yet seen him, Madam, but I am prepared for a great hange."

"I fear so," sighed she, plaintively; "George says, quite a break-up, nd Buccellini calls it 'Gotta Affievolita,' and says it is very fatal with lderly people."

"The vulgar phrase of a 'broken heart' is more expressive, Madam, nd perhaps quite as pathological."

Lady Hester drew proudly up, and seemed preparing herself for a ming encounter. They were old antagonists, and well knew each ther's mode of attack. On the present occasion, however, Grounsell did not seek a contest, and was satisfied by a single shot at the enemy, as if trying the range of his gun.

"You will probably advise a change of air and scene, Doctor Grounsell," said she, calmly, and as though inviting pacific intercourse.

"It is precisely what I have come for, Madam," answered he, in a hort, dry voice. "Sir Stafford's affairs require his immediate return to England. The vicissitudes that attend on great commercial enterprises hreaten him with large—very large losses."

Lady Hester fell back in her chair, and this time, at least, her pale heek and her powerless attitude were not feigned nor counterfeited; ut Grounsell merely handed her a smelling-bottle from the table, nd went on:

"The exact extent of his liabilities cannot be ascertained at once, ut they must be considerable. He will be fortunate if there remain to im one-fourth of his property."

Lady Hester's head fell heavily back, and she fainted away.

The Doctor rose, and sprinkled her forehead with water, and then tiently sat down with his finger on her wrist to watch the returning lo of circulation. Assured at length of her restored consciousness, he ent on:

"A small establishment, strict economy, a watchful supervision of ery domestic arrangement, together with the proceeds of the sale of the useless trumpery by which he is at present surrounded, will do

much: but he must be seconded, Madam—seconded and aided, not thwarted and opposed. George can exchange into a regiment in India; the proper steps have been already taken for that purpose."

"Have you been thoughtful enough, Sir, in your general care of this family, to engage a small house for us at Brighton?"

"I have seen one at Ramsgate, Madam," replied he, dryly; "but the rent is more than we ought to give."

"Are *we* so very poor as that, Sir?" said she, sarcastically, laying emphasis on the pronoun.

"Many excellent and worthy persons, Madam, contrive to live respectably on less."

"Is Miss Onslow to go out as a governess, Doctor? I am afraid you have forgotten her share in these transactions?"

"I have a letter from her in my pocket, Madam, would show, that she herself is not guilty of this forgetfulness, wherein she makes the very proposition you allude to."

"And *me*? Have you no sphere of self-denial and duty—have you no degrading station, nor menial servitude, adapted to *my* habits?

"I know of none, Madam," said Grounsell, sternly. "Varnish will no more make a picture, than fine manners prove a substitute for skill or industry."

"This is really too much, Sir," said she, rising, her face now crimson with anger; "and even if all you have said prove true, reverse of fortune can bring no heavier infliction than the prospect of *your* intimacy and obtrusive counsels."

"You may not need them, Madam. In adversity," said Grounsell, with a smile, "healthy stomachs get on very well without bitters." And so saying, he bowed and left the room.

For a few moments Lady Hester sat overwhelmed by the tidings she had just heard, and then, suddenly rising, she rung the bell for her maid.

"Send Miss Dalton to me, Celestine; say I wish to speak to her immediately," said she. "This may be the last time we shall speak to each other ere we invert our positions," muttered she to herself. And in the working of her features might be read all the agony of the reflection.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"PRATOLINO."

How like the great world is every little section of it! How full of all its passions and interests, its warring jealousies, and its selfish struggles! Within the Mazzarini Palace, that night, were at work every emotion and sentiment which sway the wide communities of men; and Hope and Fear, the yearnings of Ambition, and the gloomy forebodings of Despair, sat beside the pillows of those who, in vain, sought sleep and forgetfulness!

Before that long night ended, Sir Stafford had learned his ruin—for it was little less. Kate had yielded, to the pressing entreaties of Lady Hester, her consent to accept Midchikoff; and, just as day was breaking, George Onslow stole to his father's bedside, to see him once more—perhaps for the last time! It would be difficult to say in which of those three hearts the darkest sorrow brooded! With noiseless step, and cautious gesture, George crossed the little sitting-room, and entered his father's chamber; and, without awaking the servant, who kept watch habitually without, but now had dropped off to sleep, he gained the bedside, and sat down.

The terrible tidings he had just heard were evidently working on Sir Stafford's brain, and, despite all the influence of his opiate, still engaged his faculties; for his lips continued to move rapidly, and short broken sentences fell from him incessantly. "Poor George! poor George!" he muttered from time to time, and the tears rolled down the young man's cheek as he heard them.

"How unworthy of him have I been!" thought he; "how shamefully unworthy and forgetful! Here should have been my place, for those hours which I have spent in noisy dissipation and debauch; and now I come for the first time, and probably the last! Oh, my poor father! how will you bear up against the shock that is preparing for you?—for, with all my faults, I know how you have loved me." A heavy tear dropped from him on the old man's cheek as he said this, and gently brushing it off with his hand, Sir Stafford opened his eyes and awoke. A mild and gentle smile broke over his features as he saw his son beside him, and he drew him towards him, and kissed him.

"Have you been long here, George?" said he, affectionately.

"But a few minutes. I am so sorry to have disturbed you," muttered the other, in confusion.

"Have you seen Grounsell yet? Has he told you?" asked Sir Stafford.

"Grounsell?—no, Sir. I did not even hear of his arrival. What are his tidings?"

"The saddest, perhaps, one friend can bring another," sighed Onslow, as he covered his eyes with his hand. "Nay, nay—I am wrong," said he, rapidly. "So long as Sydney and yourself are spared to me, I have no right to say this; still, George, it is a terrible blow that strikes a man down from affluence to poverty, and, in place of wealth and power, leaves him nothing but insignificance and ruin!"

"Good Heavens, father! is your brain wandering? What fancies are these that are flitting across your mind?"

"Sad and stern truths, my poor boy," replied the old man, grasping his son's hand in his fevered palm. "A few weeks more will see the great House of Onslow bankrupt. These things cannot be told too briefly, George," said he, speaking with a tremulous and eager rapidity. "One should hear misfortune early, to gain more time for future measures. A great crash has fallen upon the monied interest of England. The vast speculations in railways have overreached themselves; failures of great houses abroad have added to the difficulty. The correspondents whose solvency we never doubted are tottering to ruin. Every post brings tidings of some new failure; and from Odessa, from Hamburg, and from the ports of the Baltic, to the distant shores of the New World, there is nothing but bankruptcy."

"But you have large estates, Sir; you possess property of various kinds beyond the reach of these casualties."

"I own nothing to which my creditors have not a just right, nor, if I did, could I exercise the privilege of retaining it, George," said the old man. "From what Grounsell tells me, there will be sufficient to meet every claim, but no more. There will remain nothing after! Lady Hester's settlement will, of course, secure to her a moderate competence; and we —you and I—must look about, and see how we can face this same world we have been feasting so long. My time in it will needs be brief; but you, who may look forward with hope to long years of life, must bethink you at once of the new path before you. Arouse yourself, then, to the task, and I do not know but I may be prouder of you, yet, buffeting the wild waves of adversity, and fighting the manful part of a bold, courageous spirit, than I have ever been, in seeing you in the brilliant circle of all your high and titled acquaintances. Ay, George, the English merchant never died out in my heart, for all the aristocratic leaven which accident mixed up with my fortunes. I never ceased to glory in the pride of wealth accumulated by generous enterprises and

honourable toil. I loved the life of labour that disciplined the faculties, and exercised not alone intelligence, but turned to use the gentler charities of life, linking man to man, as brethren journeying the same road, with different burdens, perhaps, but with the same goal. For myself, therefore, I have few cares. It remains with you to make them even fewer."

"Tell me what you propose for me, Sir," said George, in a low, weak voice.

"First of all, George, you ought to leave the army. Grounsell, I must tell you, is not of this opinion; he advises an exchange into a regiment in India, but I think differently. To repair, if it be possible, the shattered wreck of our fortunes, you must address yourself to business life and habits. You'll have to visit the West Indies, and, probably, the East. We still possess property in Ceylon of value; and our coffee plantations there, as yet only in their infancy, need nothing but good management to insure success. Grounsell laughed at my suggesting you for such duties, but I know you better, George, far better than *he* does. The English pluck that storms a breach or heads a charge is the very same quality that sustains a man on the long dark road of adverse fortune. I have often told Grounsell that the stuff was in you, George."

The young man squeezed his father's hand, but was obliged to turn away his head to hide the tears which filled his eyes; for what a terrible deception was he practising at that very moment, and what duplicity was there even in the silence with which he heard him!

For a few seconds Sir Stafford seemed to revel in all the bright visions of a warm fancy. The prospect his imagination had conjured up appeared to have momentarily lifted him above the reach of sorrow. He thought of his son engaged in the active business of life, and displaying in this new career the energies and resources of a bold and courageous spirit. He imagined the high-principled youth becoming the British merchant, and making the name of "Onslow" great and respected in the old arena of all their victories—the City of London. Could this but come to pass,—were this dream to be realised, and he would bless the hour that wrecked his fortune, and thus made his poverty the foundation of future greatness.

"I confess, George," said he, "that I have a pride in thinking that I knew you better than others did, and that I read in the very wayward caprices of your disposition the impatience of an active mind, and not the ennui of an indolent one." From this the old man branched off into his plans for the future; and, as if the emergency had suggested energy, talked well and clearly of all that was to be done. They were to start for

England at once. Sir Stafford felt as if he were able to set out that very day. Some weeks would elapse before the crash came, and in the interval every preparation might be taken. "I hope," said he, feelingly, "that I have few enemies; I am not sanguine enough to say, none; but such as they are, they will not seek to humiliate me, I trust, by any unnecessary publicity." The theme was a very painful one, and for a few seconds he could not go on. At last he resumed: "The extravagance of this household, George, will give much and just offence. It must be retrenched, and from this very day, from this very hour. You will look to this. It must not be said of us that, with ruin before us, we continued these habits of wasteful excess. Let these troops of idle servants be discharged at once. Except Lady Hester's carriage, sell off all equipage. Take no heed of what will be the town talk; such a downfal as ours can never be kept a secret. Let us only take care that we fall with dignity. Grounsell will remain here after us to settle everything, and our departure ought to be as speedy as may be. But you are not listening, George; do you hear me?"

It was quite true George heeded little of what his father spoke; for, with bent down head, he was trying to catch the sounds of what seemed a long low whistle from the court without. As he listened, the whistle was repeated; he knew now that it was Norwood's signal, and that "his time was up."

"I must leave you, my dear father," said he, assuming all that he could of calmness. "I have an appointment this morning, and one that I cannot well shake off. Norwood and I have promised to meet some friends at Pratolino."

"It was of that same Norwood I wished to speak to you, George. The sophistry of thinking him 'no worse than his set' will serve no longer. Such men are not fitting acquaintances for one whose character must be above reproach. Norwood is a most unworthy friend for you."

"I scarcely ever thought of him in that light. We are intimate, it is true; but such intimacy is not friendship."

"The greater the pollution of such acquaintanceship, then," said the old man, gravely. "To see the dark side of such a nature, and yet live under its baneful shadow, is infinitely worse, George, than all the self-deception of a rash confidence. Keep your promise to-day, but I beseech you let it be for the last time in such company."

Again the whistle was heard, and with it the sharp crack of a whip, denoting impatience; and fearful that some accident might betray his secret, George clasped the old man's hand fervidly within his own, and hurried away without a word.

"Is that George?" cried Norwood, as he stood beside a calessino ready arnessed, and with lamps lighted, for the morning was still dark. "Is hat George? Why, where have you been loitering this half-hour, an? Our time is six sharp, and it is now considerably past five, nd the way lies all up hill."

"I have often done the distance in half an hour," said George, ngrily.

"Perhaps the errand was a pleasanter one," rejoined Norwood, aughing; "but jump in, for I feel certain the others are before us."

George Onslow was in no mood for talking as he took his seat beside is companion; the late scene with his father and the approaching vent were enough to occupy him, even had his feeling for Norwood een different from what it was, but in reality never had he experienced he same dislike for the Viscount. All the flippant ease, all the cool ndifference he displayed, were only so many offences to one whose houghts were traversing the whole current of his life, from earliest oyhood down to that very moment. A few hours hence he might be o more! And thence arose to his mind the judgments men would pass pon him, the few who would speak charitably, the still fewer who rould regret him. What a career, thought he—what use to have made f fortune, station, health and vigour—to have lived in dissipation, and ie for a street brawl! And poor Kate! to what unfeeling scandal rill this unhappy meeting expose *you;* how impossible to expect that ruth will ever penetrate through that dark atmosphere of mystery and ialevolence the world will throw over the event.

Norwood was provoked at the silence, and tried in various ways to reak it. He spoke of the road, the weather, the horse's trotting action, ie scenery—over which the breaking day now threw fitful and uncerain lights—but all in vain; and, at last, piqued by non-success, he pitefully pointed attention to a little valley beside the road, and said, "Do you see that spot yonder, near the pine-trees—that's where Harry Iathews was shot. Malzahn sent the bullet through the brain at forty aces. They were both first-rate pistol-shots, and the only question ras, who should fire first. Harry determined to reserve his shot, and e carried the privilege into the other world with him. Malzahn knew e might trust his skill, and fired the very instant he took his ground. The moral of which is—always try and have first fire with a foreigner."

"I hear the sound of wheels behind us; who are they?" said George, ot heeding either the story or the counsel.

"The doctor, I suspect. I ordered a calessino to wait for him at the oor of the palace, and bring him up as fast as possible."

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.stances. My horses and carriages, and
. when sold, will more than meet them, and
. end."
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.v the other's arm within his own as he said this, and ad-
.re a group of some half-dozen persons were standing,
.lcony, overlooking the Val d'Arno and the graceful valley
.ce stands. Norwood quitted his friend's arm as he came
.luted the company. Nothing could possibly be more
.nstrained than the tone of their conversation, as they
about the prospect beneath, and over which, like a gauzy
.hadow of dawn was hanging. With the exception of an
they were all French—the young fashionables who were
.f the *salons* and *cafés* of the city.
. breakfasted, my Lord," said one. "If not, let me recom-
.cellent cutlets, which are not too cold, even yet."
best chocolate I ever tasted out of Paris," cried another.
Thanks," said Norwood. "We'll profit by the good counsel."

"If Guilmard be equal to his reputation, we shall not want his services," said Onslow, with a faint smile.

"Who can tell? We'll put you up at a short distance, and there's nothing shakes the nerve of your practised pistol-shot more than ten or twelve paces."

The road here became so steep that they were obliged to get down and walk for some distance, while the horse toiled slowly up behind them. As they went, Norwood continued to talk on incessantly of this, that, and t'other, as though bound to occupy the attention of his companion, while George, with half-closed eyes, strolled onward, deep in his own thoughts.

"We're not far off the place now, George," said Norwood at last, "and I wish you'd throw off that look of care and abstraction. These foreign fellows will be quite ready to misinterpret it. Seem at your ease, man, and take the thing as I've seen you take it before—as rather good fun than otherwise."

"But that is precisely what I do not feel it," said George, smiling quietly. "Twenty-four hours ago, when life had every possible advantage to bestow on me, with the prospect of an ample fortune before me, I was perfectly ready to turn out with any man who had the right to ask me; and now that I am ruined——"

"Ruined!" broke in Norwood; "what do you mean? You have not lost to that Greek fellow so largely as that?"

"Now that my father is on the verge of utter ruin," repeated George, slowly—"the news came last night—I never felt the desire of life so strong within me. A few days or weeks more will make it public gossip, so I may tell you, that we have not escaped the torrent that is sweeping away so many of the richest houses in Europe; and what between our immense liabilities and my father's scrupulous sense of honour, the chances are we shall be utterly beggared."

"The devil!" exclaimed Norwood, whose thoughts at once reverted to his own claims on George, and the unpaid acceptances he still held of his.

"That's what I feel so strange," said George, now speaking with a degree of warmth and interest, "that it should be exactly when life ceases to give promise, that I should care for it; and I own to you, I'd give anything that this meeting was not before me."

Norwood started, and turned his keen eyes on the other, but in the calm, unmoved features, he saw no traces of fear or even agitation; and it was in his habitually calm voice Onslow resumed:

"Yes, I wish the Count's hand would shake a little, Norwood. I'd

most grateful to the bullet that would take to the right or the left of e."

"Come, come, George, no more of this. We are alone here, it's true; t if you talk this way now, you may chance to look like it, by-and-by."

"And if I do not my looks will strangely belie my sentiments, that I n tell you," said Onslow, with a quiet laugh. "I don't care how you ul the confession, Norwood, but I tell you frankly, that if the insult in is instance admitted of an apology—if there were any way to come off nsistent with honour—I'd take it and not fight this Frenchman."

"Have you forgotten his reputation as a shot?" asked Norwood, ntly.

"I was not thinking of it. My mind was dwelling merely on my-lf and my own interests. How far my life, if preserved, could be ndered useful to others, and in what way my death might occasion trriment and injury."

"A most mercantile estimate of profit and loss, by Jove!" said Nor-wood, laughing; "and perhaps it is fortunate for you there is no 'amende' possible, for if Guilmard should miss you——"

"As to these acceptances," said George, not paying attention to what he other said, "I'd prefer that they should not be presented to my ther under our actual circumstances. My horses and carriages, and me other trumpery of mine, when sold, will more than meet them, and I have given orders to that end."

"Come, old fellow, it's not gone that far yet," said Norwood, affect-ing a tone of friendship, suggested by the self-satisfaction the promise of payment afforded him. "But hush! There they are, all together. Let us talk no more of these matters; and now, George, for Heaven's ake be cool."

Norwood drew the other's arm within his own as he said this, and ad-anced to where a group of some half-dozen persons were standing, side a low balcony, overlooking the Val d'Arno and the graceful valley which Florence stands. Norwood quitted his friend's arm as he came rward and saluted the company. Nothing could possibly be more sy and unconstrained than the tone of their conversation, as they atted away about the prospect beneath, and over which, like a gauzy il, the grey shadow of dawn was hanging. With the exception of an lian or two, they were all French—the young fashionables who were loungers of the *salons* and *cafés* of the city.

"Have you breakfasted, my Lord," said one. "If not, let me recom-nd some excellent cutlets, which are not too cold, even yet."

"And the best chocolate I ever tasted out of Paris," cried another.

"Thanks," said Norwood. "We'll profit by the good counsel."

And, taking a cigar from his case, he lighted it from Guilmard's, as, with hands in his paletot, he sat negligently on the wall, surveying the scene below him.

"Come, George, let's have something," whispered Norwood, eagerly, for the vacant and unoccupied stare of Onslow continued to cause the Viscount the most intense anxiety. "These fellows are affecting to be devilish cool. Let us not be behindhand." And, rather by force than mere persuasion, he dragged Onslow along, and entered the little parlour of the inn.

A large table, covered with the remains of an ample breakfast, stood in the middle of the room, and a dish of cutlets was placed to keep hot before the stove. Several loose sheets of paper lay scattered about the table, on which were scrawled absurd and ill-drawn caricatures of duels, in which attitudes of extravagant fear and terror predominated. Norwood glanced at them for a moment, and then contemptuously threw them into the fire.

"Sit down, George," said he, placing a chair for the other; "and, if you cannot eat, at least take a 'nip' of brandy. Jekyl will be up, I suppose, in a few minutes. I told him to come with the doctor."

"I never felt an appetite at this early hour," said Onslow; "and perhaps the present is not the time to suggest one."

"Did you remark Guilmard?" said Norwood, as he helped himself to a cutlet, and prepared his plate most artistically for a savoury meal. "Did you observe him, George?"

"No; I never looked that way."

"By Jove! he has got a tremendous scar on his cheek. The whole length, from the eye to the corner of his mouth. English knuckles do not certainly improve French physiognomy. A left-hander, eh?"

"I remember nothing about it," said Onslow, carelessly.

"Well, you've left him a memorandum of the transaction, any way," said the Viscount, as he ate on. "And you were talking about an apology a while ago?"

"I was wishing that the case admitted of one," said Onslow, calmly.

Norwood gave a sidelong glance at the speaker, and, although he said nothing, a gesture of angry impatience revealed what was passing within him.

"Do try that brandy. Well, then, take a glass of Curaçoa," said he, pushing the bottle towards him.

"Something! anything, in fact, you would say, Norwood, that might serve to make my courage 'carry the bead;' but you are altogether mistaken in me. It is not of myself I am thinking; my anxieties are—but

what could you care, or even understand about my motives. Finish your breakfast, and let us make an end of this affair."

"In one minute more I'm your man, but if I have a weakness, it is for a plain roast truffle, with butter. It was a first love of mine, and as the adage says, 'On y revient toujours.' Were I in your shoes, this morning, George, I'd not leave one on the dish."

"On what principle, pray," asked Onslow, smiling.

"On that of the old Cardinal, who, when his doctors pronounced his case hopeless, immediately ordered a supper of ortolans with olives. It was a grand opportunity to indulge without the terror of an indigestion; and *àpropos* to such themes, where can our worthy doctor be all this time? The calessino was close up with us all the way."

Leaving Norwood to continue his meal, George strolled out in quest of the surgeon, but none had seen nor knew anything of him. An empty calessino was standing on the road-side, but the driver only knew that the gentleman who came with him had got out there, and entered the park.

"Then we shall find him near the little lake," said Norwood, coolly, as George returned, disappointed. But it's strange, too, that he should be alone. Jekyl was to have been with him. These foreigners ever insist upon two seconds on either side. Like the gambler that always is calling for fresh cards, it looks very like a suspicion of foul play. Go back, George, and see if the fellow knows nothing of Jekyl. You've only to name him, for every cab, cad, and barcaruolo of Florence is acquainted with Master Albert."

George returned to the spot, but without any success. The man stated that he took his stand, as he was desired, at the gate of the palace, and that a little man, apparently somewhat elderly, came out, and asked which way the others had gone, and how long before they had started. "See that you pick them up, then," said he, "but don't pass them. He talked incessantly," added the man, "the whole way, but in such bad Italian that I could make nothing of it, and so I answered at random. If I were tired of *him*, I fancy he was sick of *me*; and when he got out yonder, and passed into the park, it was a relief to us both."

George was just turning away, when his eye caught a glimpse of the glorious landscape beneath, on which a freshly risen sun was shedding all its splendour. There are few scenes, even in Italy, more striking than the Val d'Arno around Florence. The beautiful city itself, capped with many a dome and tower, the gigantic castle of the Bargello, the graceful arch of the Baptistery, the massive façade of the Pitti, all, even to the lone tower on the hill where Galileo watched, rich in their storied memories; while on the gentle slope of the mountain stood hundreds of

[illegible] whose very names are like spells to the imagination, and [illegible] the Boccaccio, vie in interest with the sterner realities of the Medici, the Pazzi, the Salviati, and the Strozzi. What a flood [illegible] over the mind, to think how every orange-grove and [illegible] each clump of olives, or each alley of cedars, have witnessed [illegible] or the most glorious triumphs of man's intellect [illegible] that every spot we see has its own claim to immortality.

[illegible] however, did Onslow survey the scene. [illegible] its picturesque beauty. The glittering [illegible] the waving tree tops, the parterres of [illegible] whose terraces were shadowed by the [illegible] all made up a picture of rich and [illegible] himself on the deep grass, and [illegible] unable to tear himself away, he [illegible] whip immediately beneath him, [illegible] travelling-carriages, which [illegible] horses to each could barely drag along against [illegible] A mounted courier in advance proclaimed that the [illegible] and everything about the equipages [illegible] As Onslow knew all who [illegible] he was curious to see who was [illegible] in the year, and, stepping into a little [illegible] the carriages to pass.

[illegible] "breathe" the weary horses, [illegible] against the hill, and at last, turning a [illegible] the first carriage drew short up directly in front [illegible] The panels bore the flaunting and pretentious arms [illegible] with many an armorial emblem, which, however [illegible] the Czar would not suffer within his own [illegible] he started for a well-known [illegible] his desire of concealment, he [illegible] It was Kate was speaking: he could not [illegible] but the accents were her own. Oh, for one look at [illegible] and dashed headlong through the [illegible] where by another bend the road made a rapid turn [illegible]

[illegible] the horses had regained their wind, and were away at a [illegible] as George tore onward through the closely interwoven branches and thick underwood of the grove. There was no path, nor, [illegible] of sight or sound of the road, anything to guide him; but he dashed on, at the direction he supposed the carriage must take. At

ery step the way grew more intricate and difficult; the pits the pea-
nts dig for chestnut leaves, the little heaps collected for firewood, in-
cepted him at each moment. With torn clothes and bleeding hands,
still rushed madly, resolutely bent upon his object; and with many a
ise, and many a scar, at last gained the open country, just in time
see the second carriage crowning the peak of the mountain above
head; while he could hear the sharp, clanking sound of the drag as
ey fastened it to the leading carriage. Any attempt to overtake them
the hill must now be hopeless. He well knew the pace at which a
ntinental postilion descends a mountain, and how the steepest gal-
ies of Alps and Apennines are often galloped down at speed. For
les below him he could see the winding zigzags of the road, and at
ch turning he fancied how he might catch sight of her. The
ountain itself was terraced with vineyards, from base to summit; but
om the steepness of its side, these terraces were but narrow strips of
ound, barely sufficient for the vinedresser to pass when tending his
nts, or gathering in their produce. To look down on this giant
ir—for such it seemed—was a giddy sensation, and few could have
veyed the precipitous descent without a sense of danger. Onslow's
oughts, however, had but one object—to see Kate once, and for
last time. By a straight descent of the mountain, leaping from
race to terrace, it was possible for him to reach the bottom before
carriages could traverse the winding course of the road; and no
mer was the thought conceived, than he proceeded to execute it. It
difficult to convey to those who have never seen these terraced flights
earth a true notion of the peril of such an undertaking; but they
o have beheld them will acknowledge that little short of utter reck-
sness could dare it. Less leaping than dropping from height to
ight, the slightest impulse will carry the footsteps beyond the edge of
terrace, and then all self-control is lost, and destruction, to every
pearance, inevitable.

The youth, whose nerves have been trained by the sports of fox-
nting and deer-stalking, however, is seldom unprepared for sudden
nger; and George never hesitated, when once the undertaking seemed
acticable. By sidelong leaps he descended the first three or four
races well and safely. Impressed with the risk of the exploit, he
ver turned his eyes from the spot whereon he meant to alight, and
asured every bound with accuracy. Suddenly, however, his atten-
n was caught by the postilion's bugle sounding, several hundred feet
ow him, and, in a bend of the road, he saw the dust left by the fast-
ending carriage. Forgetful of safety—of everything, save his
ject—he leaped at random, and with a tremendous bound cleared

[illegible] passed [illegible]
[illegible] the winding [illegible]
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[illegible] family.
[illegible] left alone he
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[illegible] French custom i

[illegible] cavalry office
[illegible] that all
[illegible] have come he

"A little patience—nothing more. My friend must have lost his way; some accident or other has detained him, and I expect to see him here every instant."

"Shall we say half an hour longer, my Lord?" rejoined the other, taking out his watch. "That will bring us to eight o'clock."

"Which, considering that our time was named 'sharp six,'" interposed Trouville, "is a very reasonable 'grace.'"

"Your expression is an impertinence, Monsieur," said Norwood, fiercely.

"And yet I don't intend to apologise for it," said the other, smiling.

"I'm glad of it, Sir. It's the only thing you have said to-day with either good sense or spirit."

"Enough, quite enough, my Lord," replied the Frenchman gaily. "Dans la bonne société, on ne dit jamais de trop. Where shall it be, and when?"

"Here, and now," said Norwood, "if I can only find any one who will act for me."

"Pray, my Lord, don't go in search of him," said Trouville, "or we shall despair of seeing you here again."

"I will give a bail for my re-appearance, Sir, that you cannot doubt of," cried Norwood, advancing towards the other with his cane elevated.

A perfect burst of horror broke from the Frenchmen at this threat, and three or four immediately threw themselves between the contending parties.

"But for this, my Lord," said the old officer, "I should have offered you my services."

"And I should have declined them, Sir," said Norwood, promptly. "The first peasant I meet with will suffice;" and, so saying, he hurried from the spot, his heart almost bursting with passion. With many a malediction of George—with curses deep and cutting on every one whose misconduct had served to place him in his present position—he took his way towards the high road.

"What could have happened?" muttered he; "what confounded fit of poltroonery has seized him? a fellow that never wanted pluck in his life! Is it possible that he can have failed now? And this to occur at the very moment they are beggared! Had they been rich, as they were a few months back, I'd have made the thing pay. Ay, by Jove! I'd have 'coined my blood,' as the fellow says in the play, and written a swinging cheque with red ink! And now I have a bad quarrel, and

nothing to come of it! and so to walk the high roads in search of some one who can load a pistol!"

A stray peasant or two, jogging along to Florence—a postilion with return horses—a shabbily-dressed curate, or a friar with a sack behind him, were all that he saw for miles of distance, and he returned once more to interrogate the calessino driver as to the stranger who accompanied him from the city.

Any one whose misfortune it may have been to make inquiries from an Italian Vetturino of any fact, no matter how insignificant or unimportant, will sympathise with Norwood's impatience at the evasive and distrustful replies that now met his questions. Although the fact could have no possible concern or interest for him, he prevaricated and contradicted himself half a dozen times over, as to the stranger's age, country, and appearance, so that, utterly baffled and provoked, the Viscount turned away and entered the Park.

"I, too, shall be reported missing, I suppose," said he, bitterly, as he walked along a little path that skirted a piece of ornamental water. "By Jupiter! this is a pleasant morning's work, and must have its reparation one day or other."

A hearty sneeze suddenly startled him as he spoke; he turned hastily about, but could see no one, and yet his hearing was not to be deceived! He searched the spot eagerly, he examined the little boat-shed—the copse—the underwood—everything, in fact, but not a trace of living being was to be seen; at last, a slight rustling sound seemed to issue from a piece of rustic shellwork, representing a river god reclining on his urn, and, on approaching, he distinctly detected the glitter of a pair of eyes within the sockets of the figure.

"Here goes for a brace of balls into him," cried Norwood, adjusting a cap on his pistol. "A piece of stonework that sneezes is far too like a man to be trusted."

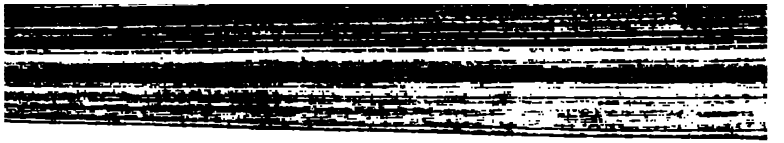
Scarcely was the threat uttered, when a tremulous scream issued from within, and a voice, broken with terror, called out,

"D—don't fire, my Lord. You'll m—m—murder me. I'm Purvis—Sc—Sc—Scroope Purvis."

"How did you come to be there, then?" asked Norwood, half angrily.

"I'll tell you when I g—get out!" was the answer; and he disappeared from the loophole at which he carried on the conversation for some seconds. Norwood began to fancy that the whole was some mystification of his brain, for no trace of him was to be had, when he emerged from the boat-house with his hat stripped of the brim, and his clothes in tatters, his scratched face and hands attesting that his transit had not

Purvis caught praying.



ı of the easiest. "It's like a r—r—rat-hole," cried he, puffing for ıth.

And what the devil brought you there?" asked Norwood, rudely.

I ca—came out to see the fight!" cried he; "and when you're le there you have a view of the whole Park, and are quite safe, too."

Then it was you who drove out in the calessino meant for the :or?" said Norwood, with the air of a man who would not brook an ivocation.

Yes; that was a d—d—dodge of mine to get out here," said he, :kling.

Well, Master Purvis," said Norwood, drawing his arm within his , "if you can't be the doctor, you shall at least be the 'Second.' s is a dodge of mine; so come along, and no more about it."

But I ca—can't; I never was—I never could be a se—se—second."

You shall begin to-day, then, or my name's not Norwood. You've ı the cause of a whole series of mishaps and misfortunes; and, by e! if the penalty were a heavier one, you should pay it."

I tell you, I n—never saw a duel; I—I never f—fought one; I :r will fight one; I don't even know how they g—go about it."

You shall learn, Sir; that's all," said Norwood, as he hastened along, ;ging the miserable Purvis at his side. "But for you, Sir," con- ed he, in a voice thick with passion,—"but for you, Sir, and your terate taste for pimping into what does not concern you, we should ; experienced no delay nor disappointment this morning. The con- ıences are that I shall have to stand where another ought to have d, and take to myself a quarrel in which I have had no share."

H—how is that? Do—do—do tell me all about it!" cried Purvis, rly.

I'll tell you nothing, Sir; not a syllable. Your personal adventures this morning must be the subject of your revelations when you get : to Florence, if ever you do get back."

Why, I—I'm—I'm not going to fight anybody!" exclaimed he, in ɔr.

No, Sir, but *I* am; and, in the event of any disastrous incident, *your* tion may be unpleasant. If Trouville falls, you'll have to make for ıbardy, and cross over into Switzerland; if he shoots me, you can my passport, it is *visé* for the Tyrol. As they know me at ruck, you'd better keep to the south'ard—some of the smaller places ıt Botzen, or Brixen."

But I don't know Bo—Bo—Botzen on the map! and I don't see why to sk—sk—skulk about the Continent like a refu—refu—refugee ı!"

"Take your own time, then; and, perhaps, ten years in a fortress may make you wiser. It's no affair of mine, you know; and I merely gave you the advice, as I'm a little more up to these things than you are."

"But, supposing that I'll have no—nothing to do with the matter—that I'll not be present—that I refuse to see——"

"You shall and you must, Sir; and if I hear another word of objection out of your mouth, or if you expose me, by any show of your own poltroonery, to the ribald insolence of these Frenchmen, by Heaven! I'll hold your hand in my own when I fire at Count Trouville."

"And I may be mu—mu—murdered!" screamed Purvis. "An innocent man's bl—blood shed, all for nothing!"

"Bluebeard treated his wives to the same penalty for the same crime, Master Purvis. And now listen to me, Sir, and mark well my words. With the causes which have led to this affair you have no concern whatever; your only business here is in the capacity of my second. Be present when the pistols are loaded; stand by as they step the ground; and, if you can do no more, try at least to look as if you were not going to be shot at." Neither the counsel nor the tone it was delivered in were very reassuring; and Purvis went along with his head down and his hands in his pockets, reflecting on all the "accidents by fire-arms" he had read of in the newspapers, together with the more terrible paragraphs about fatal duels, and criminal proceedings against all concerned in them.

The Frenchmen were seated in the garden at a table, and smoking their cigars, as Norwood came up, and, in a few words, explained that a countryman of his own, whom he had met by chance, would undertake the duties of his friend.

"I have only to say, gentlemen," he added, "that he has never even witnessed an affair of this kind; and I have but to address myself to the loyal good faith of Frenchmen to supply any deficiencies in his knowledge. Mr. Purvis, Messieurs."

The old Colonel having courteously saluted him, took him to a short distance aside, and spoke eagerly for a few minutes, while Norwood, burning with anxiety and uneasiness, tried to smoke his cigar with every semblance of unconcern.

"I'm sure, if you think so," cried Scroope, aloud, "I'm not the m—man to gainsay the opinion. A miss is as g—g—good as a m—mile; and as he didn't strike him——"

"Tonnerre de Dieu! Sir—strike him!" screamed the old soldier. "Did you say strike him?"

"No, I didn't—I couldn't have meant that," broke in Purvis. "I wished to remark that, as there was no mischief done——"

"And who will venture to say that, Sir?" interposed the other. "Is nothing that a Frenchman should have been menaced?"

"That's a gr—great deal—a tremendous deal. It's as much as beating another man; I know that," muttered poor Purvis, depressingly.

"Is this a sneer, Sir?" asked the Colonel, drawing himself up to his full height.

"No, no, it ain't; no, upon my soul I'm quite serious. I never was less disposed for a jest in my life."

"You could never have selected a less opportune moment for one, Sir," rejoined the other, gravely. "Am I to conclude, Sir," resumed he, after a second's interval, "that we have no difference of opinion on this affair?"

"None whatever. I agree with you in everything you have s—said, and everything you in—intend to say."

"Your friend will then apologise?" resumed the Colonel.

"He shall—he must."

"Simply expressing his regret that an unguarded action should have occasioned a misconception, and that in lifting his arm he neither intended the gesture as a menace nor an insult. Isn't that your meaning?"

"Just so; and that if he *had* struck he wouldn't have hurt him."

"Feu d'enfer! Sir, what *are* you saying; or do you mean this for a mockery of us?" screamed the Colonel, in a fit of passion.

"You terrify me so," cried Purvis; "you are so impe—impe—impetuous, I don't know what I'm saying."

The Frenchman measured him with a glance of strange meaning. It was evident that such a character was somewhat new to him, and it required all his skill and acuteness to comprehend it. "Very well, Sir," said he, at last, "I leave the details entirely to yourself; speak to your friend, arrange the matter between you, and let us finish the affair as speedily as may be."

"What is all this delay about?" muttered Norwood, angrily, as the other joined him; "is there any difficulty in stepping twelve or twenty paces?"

"None; but we've hit upon a b—better plan, and you've only to say that you're sorry for it all—that you didn't m—mean anything—and that you never did b—b—beat a Frenchman—nor will you ever do so in future."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Norwood, in astonishment.

"That we'll all go back and lunch at the 'Luna;' for there's no—nothing to fight about."

Norwood pushed by him contemptuously, and, with hurried steps, walked up to where the old Colonel stood. "You are a French officer, Sir," said he, "and I rely upon your honour that, whether from the ignorance or inaptitude of that gentleman, no blame may attach itself to me in this business. I have no apology to offer, nor any amende save one."

"Very well, Sir, we are ready," said the Colonel. "I will ask one of my countrymen to act for you, for I see you are in very indifferent hands."

And now, like men who were well accustomed to the task, they set about the details of the duel, while Purvis, being at full liberty, slipped from the spot, and retired into the wood.

"You've won the first fire, my Lord," said a young Frenchman to Norwood; "the conditions are twelve paces—back to back—to turn at the word, and fire."

Norwood bowed, and, without speaking, followed the other to the spot where he was to stand. As he waited thus, pistol in hand, he was directly opposite to the place wherein Purvis had taken refuge, and who, seeing Norwood in front of him, with a cocked pistol, and his finger on the trigger, uttered a scream of terror, and fell flat on the ground. Before the rest could discover the cause of the outcry, a shout from outside of the "Police"—the "Gendarmes"—was heard, and Dr. Grounsell rushed into the garden, followed by several dismounted dragoons. In an instant all were away; Norwood sprang over a low balcony into a vineyard, while in various directions the others scampered off, leaving Purvis alone upon the field.

But too happy to have fallen into the safe keeping of the authorities, Purvis accepted his captivity with a most placid contentment.

"Where's Captain Onslow? Have you seen him, Sir?" whispered Grounsell to him.

"I have seen everybody, but I don't re—remember anything. It's all a dr—dr—dream to me."

"There was no duel? They hadn't fought?" asked Grounsell.

"I—I—I think not; pro—pro—probably not," said Purvis, whose faculties were still very cloudy.

Grounsell turned away from him in disdain, and entered the house. To all his inquiries from the waiters of the inn the answers were vague and insufficient, nor could the Doctor discover either what had occurred.

or the reasons of the long delay on the ground. Meanwhile, the "Carabinieri," stimulated by liberal promises of reward, were searching the Park in every quarter, and scouring the country around to arrest the fugitives; and the peasantry, enlisted in the pursuit, hastened hither and thither to aid them. Whether really unable to come up with them, or, as is more probable, concurring in the escape through bribery, the Dragoons returned to the inn, after about an hour's absence, without the capture of a single prisoner.

Grounsell cursed their Italian indolence, and reviled every institution of their lazy land. How he raved about foreign falsehood and rascality, and wished for a London Detective and a Magistrate of Bow-street. Never did Lord Palmerston so thirst to implant British institutions in a foreign soil, as did he to teach these "Maccaroni rascals what a good Police meant." What honest indignation did he not vent upon all English residents abroad, who, for sake of a mild climate and lax morality, could exchange their native country for the Continent; and at last, fairly worn out with his denunciations, he sat down on a bench, tired and exhausted.

"Will you t—t—tell them to let me go?" cried Purvis. "I've done nothing. I never do anything. My name is Purvis, Sc—Sc—Scroope Purvis, bro—brother to Mrs. Ricketts, of the Villino Zoe."

"Matters which have no possible interest for *me*, Sir," growled out Grounsell; "nor am I a Corporal of 'Gendarmes,' to give orders for your liberation."

"But they'll take me to—to prison!" cried Purvis.

"With all my heart, Sir, so that I be not your fellow captive," rejoined the Doctor, angrily, and left the spot, while the Police, taking as many precautions for securing Purvis as though he had been a murderer or a housebreaker, assisted him into a calèche, and, seated one on either side of him, with their carbines unslung, set out for Florence.

"They'll take me for Fr—Fr—Fra Diavolo, if I enter the city in this fashion," cried Purvis; but certainly his rueful expression might have belied the imputation.

Grounsell sat down upon a grassy bench beside the road, overcome with fatigue and disappointment. From the hour of his arrival in Florence he had not enjoyed one moment of rest. On leaving Lady Hester's chamber he had betaken himself to Sir Stafford's apartment, and there till nigh daybreak had he sat, breaking the sad tidings of ruin to his old friend, and recounting the terrible story of disasters which were to crush him into poverty. Thence he hastened to George Onslow's room; but he was already gone. A few minutes before he

[illegible] and all that remained for [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] meeting, while he [illegible] forward in Florence [illegible] residence at once.

[illegible] Grounsell mounted the [illegible] just as its owner had [illegible] There was an almost [illegible] might have made less [illegible] The little wooden [illegible] discoloured hue and dinged [illegible] and the bunch of [illegible] the score of either [illegible] feeling disconcerted at their [illegible] them with sincere satisfac- [illegible] the Doctor to Flo- [illegible] of so early a

[illegible] the unseasonable hour, Sir," [illegible] thrown off his balance by [illegible] for me."

[illegible] he is sure of being [illegible] You'll find that macca- [illegible] Montmartre always [illegible] His maxim was, 'Keep [illegible]

[illegible] Sir. Nothing but a matter of [illegible] I only reached [illegible] at the Mazzarini [illegible] Some are questions for time [illegible] immediately pressing. One of these [illegible] What is he about to meet, and for [illegible]

[illegible] young man—quite a gentleman. [illegible] French mission here, and related to the [illegible] you must have met at 'Madame Parivaux's' for- [illegible]

"[illegible] of them, Sir. But what's the quarrel?"

"It originated, I believe, in some form of disputation—an altercation," stuttered Jekyll as he sweetened and sipped his coffee.

"A play transaction—a gambling affair, eh?"

"I fancy not; Comte Guilmard does not play."

"So far, so good," said Grounsell. "Now, Sir, how is it to be arranged?—what settlement can be effected? I speak to you frankly, perhaps bluntly, Mr. Jekyl, for my nature has few sympathies with courteous ambiguities. Can this business be accommodated without a meeting?"

Jekyl shook his head, and gave a soft, plaintive little sigh.

"Is friendly interference out of the question, Sir?"

Another shake of the head, and a sigh.

"Is there any law in the country? Can the police do nothing?"

"The frontiers are always easily accessible," simpered Jekyl, as he stole a look at his watch.

"Ay, to be sure," broke in Grounsell, indignantly; "the very geography of the Continent assists this profligacy, and five paces over an imaginary boundary gives immunity in a case of murder! Well, Sir, come along with me to the place of meeting. It is just possible that we may be of some service even yet."

"Nothing could be more agreeable to me than the opportunity of cultivating your acquaintance, Doctor Grounsell, but I have already sent off a few lines to Lord Norwood, to apologise for my absence—a previous engagement."

"What! at this hour of the morning, Sir?" burst out Grounsell.

"Even at this early hour, Doctor, our cares commence," said Jekyl, blandly.

"Upon this occasion they must give way to duties, then," said Grounsell, sternly. "The word may sound strangely in your ears, Sir, but I use it advisedly. You have been well received and hospitably entertained by this family. They have shown you many marks of kindness and attention. Now is the opportunity to make some sort of requital. Come, then, and see if this young man cannot be rescued from peril."

"You touch my feelings in the very tenderest spot," said Jekyl, softly. "When gratitude is mentioned, I am a child—a mere child."

"Be a man, then, for once, Sir; put on your hat and accompany me," cried Grounsell.

"Would you have me break an appointment, Doctor?"

"Ay, to be sure I would, Sir—at least such an appointment as I suspect yours to be. This may be a case of life or death."

"How very dreadful," said Jekyl, settling his curls at the glass. Pascal compares men to thin glass phials, with an explosive powder within them, and really one sees the force of the similitude every day; but Jean Paul improves upon it by saying, that we are all burning-

glasses of various degrees of density, so that our passions ignite at different grades of heat."

"Mine are not very far from the focal distance at this moment," said Grounsell, with savage energy; "so fetch your hat, Sir, at once, or——"

"Unless I prefer a cap, you were going to add," interposed Jekyl, with a sweet smile.

"We must use speed, Sir, or we shall be too late," rejoined the Doctor.

"I flatter myself few men understand a rapid toilet better," said Jekyl, rising from the table; "so if you'll amuse yourself with Bell's Life, Punch, or Jules Janin, for five minutes, I'm your man."

"I can be company for myself for that space, Sir," said the other, gruffly, and turned to the window, while Jekyl, disappearing behind the drapery that filled the doorway, was heard humming an opera air from within.

Grounsell was in no superlative mood of good temper with the world, nor would he have extended to the section of it he best knew, the well-known eulogy on the "Bayards." "Swindlers," "Rakes," and "Vagabonds," were about the mildest terms of the vocabulary he kept muttering to himself, while a grumbling thunder-growl of malediction followed each. The very aspect of the little chamber seemed to offer food for his anger: the pretentious style of its decoration jarred and irritated him, and he felt a wish to smash bronzes, and brackets, and statues into one common ruin.

The very visiting-cards which lay scattered over a Sevres dish, offended him; the names of all that were most distinguished in rank and station, with here and there some little civility inscribed on the corner, "Thanks," "Come, if possible," or "Of course we expect you," showing the social request in which Jekyl stood.

"Ay," muttered he to himself, "here is one that can neither give dinners nor balls, get places or pensions, or orders, lend money or lose it, and yet the world wants him, and cannot get on without him. The indolence of profligacy seeks the aid of his stimulating activity, and the palled appetite of sensualism has to borrow the relish from vice that gives all its piquancy. Without him as the fly-wheel, the whole machinery of mischief would stand still. His boast is, that, without a sous, no millionaire is richer than he; and that every boon of fortune is at his beck. He might add, that in his comprehensive view of wickedness, he realises within himself all the vice of this good capital. I'd send such fellow to the treadmill—I'd transport him for life—I'd sentence him to

hunt kangaroos for the rest of his days—I'd——" He stopped short in his violent tirade, for he suddenly bethought him how he himself was at that very moment seeking aid and assistance at his hands, and somewhat abashed by the recollection, he called out, "Mr. Jekyl, are you ready yet?"

No answer was returned to this question, and Grounsell repeated it in a louder voice. All was silent, and not even the dulcet sounds of the air from "Lucia" broke the stillness; and now, the Doctor losing all patience, drew aside the curtain and looked in. The chamber was empty, and Jekyl was gone! His little portmanteau, and his still smaller carpet-bag, his hatcase, his canes—every article of his *personnel*, were away; and while Grounsell stood cursing the "little rascal," he himself was pleasantly seated opposite Lady Hester and Kate in the travelling-carriage, and convulsing them with laughter at his admirable imitation of the poor Doctor.

Great as was Grounsell's anger at this trickery, it was still greater when he discovered that he had been locked in. He quite forgot the course of time passed in his meditations, and could not believe it possible that there was sufficient interval to have effected all these arrangements so speedily.

Too indignant to brook delay, he dashed his foot through the door, and passed out. The noise at once summoned the people of the house to the spot, and, to Grounsell's surprise, with a police officer amongst them, who, in all the pomp of office, now barred the passage with a drawn sword.

"What is it—what's this?" cried he, in astonishment.

"Effraction by force in case of debt is punishable by the 127th section of the 'Code,'" said a dirty little man, who, with the air of a shoe-black, was still a leading member of the Florence "Bar."

"I owe nothing here—not a farthing, Sir; let me pass," cried Grounsell.

"'Fathers for sons of nonage or over that period, domiciliated in the same house,'" began the advocate, reading out of a volume in his hand, "are also responsible."

"What balderdash, Sir; I have no son; I never was married in my life; and as for this Mr. Jekyl, if you mean to father him on me, I'll resist to the last drop of my blood."

"Denunciation and menace, with show of arms, or without," began the lawyer again, "are punishable by fine and imprisonment."

Grounsell was now so worked up by fury, that he attempted to force a passage by main strength; but a general brandishing of knives by all

the family, from seven years of age upwards, warned him that the attempt might be too serious, while a wild chorus of abusive language arose from various sympathisers who poured in from the street to witness the scene.

A father who would not pay for his own son! an "assassin," who had no bowels for his kindred; a "Birbante," a "Briccone," and a dozen similar epithets, rattled on him like hail, till Grounsell, supposing that the "bite" might be in proportion to the "bark," retreated into a small chamber, and proposed terms of accommodation. Few men take pleasure in acquitting their own debts, fewer still like to pay those of their neighbours, and Grounsell set about the task in anything but a pleasant manner. There was one redeeming feature, however, in the affair. Jekyl's schedule could not have extracted a rebuke from the severest Commissioner of Bankruptcy. His household charges were framed on the most moderate scale of expenditure. A few crowns for his house rent, a few "Pauls" for his eatables, and a few "Grazie" for his washing, comprised the whole charge of his establishment, and not even Hume would have sought to cut down the "estimates." Doubtless, more than one-half of the demands were unjust and extortionate, and many were perhaps already acquitted; but as all the rogueries were but homœopathic iniquities after all, their doses might be endured with patience. His haste to conclude the arrangements had, however, a very opposite tendency. The more yielding he became the greater grew their exactions, and several times the treaty threatened to open hostilities again; and at last it was full an hour after Jekyl's departure that Grounsell escaped from durance, and was free to follow George Onslow to Pratolino.

With his adventures in the interval the reader is sufficiently acquainted; and we now come back to that moment where, bewildered and lost, he sat down upon the bench beside the high road.

CHAPTER XLI.

"A SAD HOUSEHOLD."

s already past noon when Grounsell reached Florence. He was at the gate by the authorities examining a peasant's cart in him—a process which appeared to take a most unusual degree nd scrutiny—and thus gave the Doctor another occasion for in- against the "stupid ignorance of foreigners, who throw every impediment in the way of traffic and intercourse."

at have they discovered now?" cried he, testily, as in a crowd of of all sorts and sizes, he was jammed up like a coal vessel in "Is the peasant a revolutionary General in disguise? or has ibles, or British cutlery, under the straw of his baroccino?"

Eccelenza." (Every one in a passion in Italy is styled Ecce- an "anodyne.") "It's a sick man, and they don't know what th him."

are a duty on ague or nervous fever?" asked he, angrily.

y suspect he's dead, Eccelenza, and, if so, there's no use in him into the city, to bring him out again by-and-by."

don't they know if a man be dead or alive?"

when he's a foreigner, Illustrissimo; and such is the case here."

very true," said Grounsell, dryly, as if acquiescing in the truth mark. "Let me have a look at him; perhaps I can assist their t." And with this he descended, and made his way through the ho, in all the eagerness of curiosity, thronged around the cart. it's great coat was drawn over the figure, and even the face of man, as he lay at full length on the mat flooring of the baro- d on his chest some pious hand had deposited a rosary and a rucifix.

sell hastily drew back the covering, and then clutching an arm at either side of him, he uttered a faint cry, for the pale and features before him, were those of George Onslow. The of the Doctor, however, soon rose above every other feeling, and seized the wrist and felt for the pulse. Its beatings were slow, and irregular, denoting the brain as the seat of injury. l, therefore, proceeded to examine the head, which, covered gged and matted blood, presented a terrific appearance; yet

neither there nor elsewhere was there any trace of injury by the arrival. The history of discovery was soon told. A shepherd had detected the body as he passed the spot, and hailing some peasants on their way to Florence, advised their taking charge of it to the city, where they would be surely recompensed. The natural suggestion of Grounsell's mind was, that, in making his escape from the Gendarmes, Onslow had fallen over a cliff. To convey him home, and get him to bed, if possible, before Sir Stafford should hear of the misfortune, was his first care; and in this he succeeded. It was the time when Sir Stafford usually slept; and Grounsell was able to examine his patient, and satisfy himself that no fatal injury was done, long before the old Baronet awoke.

"Sir Stafford wishes to see you, Sir; he has asked for you repeatedly to-day," said Proctor.

"Has he heard—does he know anything of this?" said Grounsell, with a gesture to the bed where George lay.

"Not a word, Sir. He was very cheerful all the morning, but wondering where you could have gone, and what Mister George was doing."

"Now for it, then," muttered Grounsell to himself, as, with clasped hands and knitted brows, he walked along; his mind suffering the very same anxieties as had oftentimes beset him on the eve of some painful operation in his art.

"Well, Grounsell," said the old man, with a smile, as he entered, "is it to give me a foretaste of my altered condition that you all desert me to-day? You have never come near me, nor George either, so far as I can learn."

"We've had a busy morning of it, Stafford," said the Doctor, sitting down on the bed, and laying his finger on the pulse. "You are better—much better to-day. Your hand is like itself, and your eye is free from fever."

"I feel it, Grounsell. I feel as if, with some twenty years lean upon my back, I could like to begin my tussle with the world, and try issue with the best."

"You're young enough, and active enough yet, for what is before you, Stafford. Yesterday I told you of everything in colours perhaps gloomier than reality. The papers of to-day are somewhat more cheery in their tidings. The hurricane may pass over, and leave us still afloat; but there is another trial for you, my old friend, and you must take heart to bear it well and manfully."

Sir Stafford sat up in his bed, and, grasping Grounsell by either shoulder, cried out, "Go on—tell it quickly."

"Be calm, Stafford; be yourself, my old friend," said Grounsell, terri-

fied at the degree of emotion he had called up. "Your own courageous spirit will not desert you now."

"I know it," said the old man, as, relaxing his grasp, he fell back upon the pillow, and then, turning on his face, he uttered a deep groan. "I know your tidings, now," cried he, in a burst of agony! "Oh, Grounsell, what is all other disgrace compared to this!"

"I am speaking of George—of your son," interposed Grounsell, hastily, and seizing with avidity the opportunity to reveal all at once. "He left this for Pratolino this morning to fight a duel, but by some mischance has fallen over a cliff, and is severely injured."

"He's dead—you would tell me he's dead!" said the old man, in a faint, thrilling whisper.

"Far from it. Alive, and like to live, but still sorely crushed and wounded."

"Oh God!" cried the old man, in a burst of emotion, "what worldliness is in my heart, when I am thankful for such tidings as this! When it is a relief to me to know that my child, my only son, lies maimed and broken on a sick bed, instead of—instead of——" A gush of tears here broke in upon his utterance, and he wept bitterly.

Grounsell knew too well the relief such paroxysms afford to interfere with its course, while, to avoid any recurrence even in thought to the cause, he hurriedly told all that he knew of George's intended meeting with the Frenchman, and his own share in disturbing the rendezvous.

Sir Stafford never spoke during this recital. The terrible shock seemed to have left its stunning influence on his faculties, and he appeared scarcely able to take in with clearness the details into which the other entered.

"She's gone to Como, then," were the first words he uttered. "To this villa the Prince has lent her."

"So I understand; and, from what Proctor says, the Russian is going to marry the Dalton girl."

"Miss Dalton is along with Lady Hester?"

"To be sure; they travel together, and George was to have followed them."

"Even scandal, Grounsell, can make nothing of this. What say you, man?"

"You may defy it on that score, Stafford; but let us talk of what is more imminent—of George."

"I must see him, Grounsell; I must see my poor boy," said he, rising and making an effort to get out of bed; but weakness and mental excitement together overcame him, and he sank back again, fainting and exhausted. To this a deep, heavy sleep succeeded, and Grounsell stole

away, relieved in mind, by having acquitted himself of his painful task, and free to address his thoughts to other cares.

"Lord Norwood wishes to see you, Sir," said a servant to the Doctor, as he at last seated himself for a moment's rest in his chamber; and before Grounsell could reply the noble Viscount entered.

"Excuse this abrupt visit, Sir; but I have just heard of poor Onslow's accident. Is there any danger in his condition?"

"Great and imminent danger, my Lord."

"By Jove!—sorry for it. You don't happen to know how it occurred."

"A fall evidently was the cause, but how incurred I cannot even guess."

"In the event of his coming about again, when might we expect to see him all right?—speaking loosely, of course."

"Should he recover, it will take a month, or perhaps two, before he convalesces."

"The devil it will! These Frenchmen can't be made to understand the thing at all; and as Guilmard received a gross personal outrage, he is perfectly out of his mind at the delay in obtaining satisfaction. What is to be done?"

"I am a poor adviser in such cases, my Lord; nor do I see that the matter demands any attention from us whatever."

"Not from *you*, perhaps," said Norwood, insolently; "but I had the misfortune to go out as his friend! My position is a most painful and critical one."

"I should suppose that no one will understand how to deal with such embarrassments better than your Lordship."

"Thanks for the good opinion; the speech I take to be a compliment, however you meant it. I believe I am not altogether unskilled in such affairs, and it is precisely because such is the case that I am here now. Onslow, in other hands than mine, is a ruined man. The story, tell it how you will, comes to this: that, having gone out to meet a man he had grossly insulted, he wanders away from the rendezvous, and is found some hours after at the foot of a cliff, insensible. He may have fallen—he may have been waylaid—though everything controverts this notion; or, lastly, he may have done the act himself. There will be advocates for each view of the case; but it is essential, for his honour and reputation, that one story should be authenticated. Now, I am quite ready to stand [illegible] to such a version, taking all the consequences, however [illegible]

"This [illegible] numerous indeed, my Lord," said Grounsell,

suddenly warming into an admiration of one he was always prejudiced against.

"Oh, I'm a regular John Bull!" said the Viscount, at once assuming the burden of that canticle, which helped him in all moments of hypocrisy. "Always stand by the old stock—nothing like them, Sir. The Anglo-Saxon blood will carry all before it yet; never suffer a rascally foreigner to put his foot on one of your countrymen. Have him out, Sir; parade the fellow at once: that's my plan."

"I like your spirit!" cried Grounsell, enthusiastically.

"To be sure you do, old cock," exclaimed Norwood, clapping him familiarly on the shoulder. "Depend upon it, *I'll* pull George through this. *I'll* manage the matter cleverly. There must be no mistake about it—no room for doubt or equivocation, you know. All straightforward, open, and manly: John Bull every inch of it. That's *my* notion, at least—I hope it's yours?"

"Perfectly—thoroughly so!"

"Well, then, just hand that note to Sir Stafford."—Here he placed a sealed letter in Grounsell's hand.—"Tell him what I've just told you. Let him fairly understand the whole question, and let me have the contents this evening at the *café* in the Santa Trinita—say about nine o'clock; not later than that. These fellows always gather about that hour."

"I'll take care of it," said Grounsell.

"All right!" cried Norwood, gaily, as he arose and adjusted the curls beneath his hat. "My compliments to the old gent, and tell George not to make himself uneasy. He's in safe hands. Good-by!"

"Good-by, my Lord, good-by," said Grounsell, who, as he looked after him, felt, as it were, unconsciously recurring to all his former prejudices and dislikes of the noble Viscount. "Those fellows," muttered he, "are as inexplicable to me as a new malady, of which I neither know the stages nor the symptoms! The signs I take for those of health, may be precisely the indications of corruption; and what I deem unsound, may turn out to be exactly the opposite." And so he fell into a musing fit, in which certainly his estimate of Lord Norwood continued steadily to fall lower and lower the longer he thought of him. "He must be a rogue!—he must be a scoundrel! Nature makes all its blackguards plausible, just as poison-berries are always brilliant to look at. They are both intended to be the correctives of rash impressions, and I was only a fool ever to be deceived by him. Out of this, at all hazards—that's the first thing!" muttered Grounsell to himself, as he walked hastily up and down the room. "The place is like a plague district, and we must not carry an infected rag away from it! Glorious Italy, forsooth!

There's more true enlightenment—there's a higher purpose, and a nobler view of life, in the humblest English village, than in the proudest halls of their Eternal City!"

In such pleasant reflections on national character he entered Sir Stafford's room, and found his friend seated at a table covered with newly-arrived letters; the seals were all unbroken, and the sick man was turning them over, and gazing at the different handwritings with a sad and listless apathy.

"I'm glad you've come, Grounsell. I have not courage for this," said he, pointing to the mass of letters before him.

"Begging impostors, one half of them, I'll be sworn!" said Grounsell, seating himself to the work. "Was I not right? Here's a Cabinet Minister suing for your vote on an Irish question, and entreating your speedy return to England, 'where, he trusts, the object you are both interested in may be satisfactorily arranged.' Evasive rascal! Couldn't he say, 'You shall have the Peerage for your support.' Wouldn't it be more frank, and more intelligible, to declare, 'We take you at your price!' These," said he, throwing half a dozen contemptuously from him, "are all from your constituents. The 'independent borough' contains seventy electors, and, if you owned the patronage of the two services, with a fair share of the public offices and India, you couldn't content them. I'd tell them, fairly, 'I have bought you already; the article is paid for and sent home. Let us hear no more about it!' This is more cheering. Shoenhals of Riga stands firm, and the Rotterdam house will weather the gale. That's good news, Onslow?" said he, grasping the old man's hand. "This is from Calcutta. Prospects are brightening a little in that quarter, too. Come, come—there's some blue in the sky. Who knows what good weather's in store for us?"

Onslow's lip trembled, and he passed his hand over his eyes without speaking.

"This is from Como," said Grounsell, half angrily, tossing away a highly-perfumed little three-cornered note.

"Give it to me—let me see it," said Onslow, eagerly, while, with trembling fingers, he adjusted his spectacles to read. Grounsell handed him the epistle, and walked to the window.

"She's quite well," read Sir Stafford, aloud; "they had delightful weather on the road, and found Como in full beauty on their arrival." Grounsell grumbled some angry mutterings between his teeth, and shrugged up his shoulders disdainfully. "She inquires most kindly after me, and wishes me to join them, there, for Kate Dalton's betrothal."

"Yet she never took the trouble to visit you when living under the same roof!" cried Grounsell, indignantly.

The old man laid down the letter, and seemed to ponder for some moments.

"What's the amount?—how much is the sum?" asked Grounsell, bluntly.

"The amount!—the sum!—of what?" inquired Sir Stafford.

"I ask, what demand is she making, that it is prefaced thus?"

"By Heaven! if you were not a friend of more than fifty years' standing, you should never address me as such again," cried Onslow, passionately. "Has ill-nature so absorbed your faculties that you have not a good thought or good feeling left you?"

"My stock of them decreases every day—aye, every hour, Onslow," said he, with a deeper emotion than he had yet displayed. "It is, indeed, a sorry compromise, that if age is to make us wiser, it should make us less amiable also!"

"You are not angry with me?—not offended, Grounsell?" said Onslow, grasping his hand in both his own.

"Not a bit of it. But, as to temperament, *I* can no more help *my* distrust, than *you* can conquer *your* credulity, which is a happier philosophy, after all."

"Then come, read that letter, Grounsell," said Onslow, smiling pleasantly; "put your prejudices aside for once, and be just, if not generous."

Grounsell took the note, and walked to the window to read it. The note was just what he expected—a prettily-turned inquiry after her husband's health, interwoven with various little pleasantries of travelling, incidents of the road, and so forth. The invitation was a mere suggestion, and Grounsell was half angry at how little there was to find fault with; for, even to the "Very sincerely yours, Hester Onslow," all was as commonplace as need be. Accidentally turning over the page, however, he found a small slip of silver paper—a bank cheque for five hundred pounds, only wanting Onslow's signature. Grounsell crushed it convulsively in his palm, and handed the note back to Onslow, without a word.

"Well, are you convinced?—are you satisfied now?" asked Onslow, triumphantly.

"I am perfectly so!" said Grounsell, with a deep sigh. "You must write, and tell her that business requires your immediate presence in England, and that George's condition will necessitate a return by sea. Caution her that the Daltons should be consulted about this marriage—which, so far as I know, they have not been; and I would advise, also,

seeing that there may be some interval before you can write again, that you should send her a cheque,—say for five hundred pounds."

"So you *can* be equitable, Grounsell," cried the other, joyously.

"And here is a letter from Lord Norwood," said Grounsell, not heeding the remark, and breaking the seal as he spoke. "Laconic, certainly. 'Let me have the enclosed by this evening.—N.' The enclosed are five acceptances for two hundred each; the 'value received' being his Lordship's services in upholding your son's honour. Now, here, at least, Onslow, I'll have my own way." And, with these words, he seated himself at a table, and wrote:

"My Lord,—Living in a land where assassination is cheap, and even men of small fortune can keep a Bravo, I beg to return your Lordship's bills, without submitting them to my friend for indorsement, your price being considerably above the tariff of the country, and more calculated to your own exigencies than the occasion which it was meant to remunerate.—I am, yours,

"Paul Grounsell."

"What have you said there, Grounsell? You look so self-satisfied, it can scarcely be over civil."

"There—'To the Viscount Norwood,'" said Grounsell, as he sealed and addressed the note. "We are getting through our work rapidly. In a week, or even less, if George's symptoms show nothing worse, we shall get away from this; and even on the sea one feels half as though it were England."

We need not follow Grounsell through the busy days which ensued, nor track him in his various negotiations with tradespeople, bankers, house-agents, and that legionary class which are called "Commissionaires;" enough if we say, that, in arranging for the departure of his friends, his impressions of Italian roguery received many an additional confirmation; and that, when the last day of their sojourn arrived, his firm conviction was that none but a millionaire could afford to live in this the very cheapest capital of Europe!

And now they are gone! steaming calmly away across the Gulf of Genoa. They have closed the little episode of their life in Italy, and, with heavy hearts, are turning homeward. The great Mazzarini Palace looks sad and forlorn, nor do we mean to linger much longer on a scene whence the actors have departed.

THE DALTONS

OR

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

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BY

CHARLES LEVER

ı OF THE "KNIGHT OF GWYNNE," "ROLAND CASHEL," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ.

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THE DALTONS;

OR,

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

A LAST SCENE.

ONE last glance at the Mazzarini Palace, and we leave it for ever. Seated in the drawing-room, where Lady Hester once held sway, in very chair around which swarmed her devoted courtiers and admirers, s. Ricketts now reclined, pretty much on the same terms, and with bably some of the same sentiments, as Louis Blanc, or his friend ert, might have experienced on finding themselves domesticated hin the Palace of the Luxembourg. They were, so to say, parallel umstances. There had been a great reverse of fortune, an abdication, l a flight. The sycophants of the day before were the masters now, none disputed the pretensions of any bold enough to assume dicta- . To be sure, Mrs. Ricketts' rule, like Ledru Rollin's, was but a visional Government; for already the bills for an approaching sale of rything were posted over the front of the Palace, and Racca Mor- e's people were cataloguing every article with a searching accuracy, y tormenting to the beholders.

From some confused impression that they were friends of Lady Hester, l that Mrs. Ricketts' health was in a precarious condition, Sir Stafford e orders that they should not be molested in any way, but permitted prolong their stay to the latest period compatible with the arrange-

ment for sale. A sense of gratitude, too, mingled with these feelings; for Mrs. Ricketts had never ceased to indite euphuistic notes of inquiry after George himself,—send presents of impracticable compounds in paste and preserves, together with, bottles of mixtures, lotions, embrocations, and liniments,—one tithe of which would have invalided a regiment. Grounsell, it is true, received these civilities in a most unworthy spirit; called her "an old humbug," with a very unpolite expletive annexed to it; and all but hurled the pharmacopœia at the head of the messenger. Still, he had other cares too pressing to suffer his mind to dwell on such trifles; and when Onslow expressed a wish that the family should not be disturbed in their occupancy, he merely muttered, "Let them stay, and be d—d;" and thought no more of them.

Now, although the Palace was, so to speak, dismantled, the servants discharged, the horses sent to livery for sale, the mere residence was convenient for Mrs. Ricketts. It afforded a favourable opportunity for a general "doing up" of the Villino Zoe—a moment for which all her late ingenuity had not been able to provide. It opened a convenient occasion, too, for supplying her own garden with a very choice collection of flowers from the Mazzarini—fuschias, geraniums, and orchidæ, being far beyond all the inventorial science of Morlache's men; and lastly, it conferred the pleasing honour of dating all her despatches to her hundred correspondents, from the Palazzo Mazzarini, where, to oblige her dear Lady Hester, she was still lingering—"*Se sacrificando*," as she delighted to express it, "*ai doveri dell' amicizia.*" To these cares she had now vowed herself a martyr. The General believed in her sorrows; Martha would have sworn to them; and not a whit the less sincerely, that she spent hours in secreting tulip roots and hyacinths, while a deeper scheme was in perpetration—no less than to substitute a copy of a Gerard Dow for the original, and thus transmit the genius of the Ricketts' family to a late posterity. Poor Martha would have assisted in a murder at her bidding, and not had a suspicion of its being a crime!

It was an evening "at home to her few most intimate friends," when Mrs. Ricketts, using the privilege of an invalid, descended to the drawing-room in a costume which united an ingenious compromise between the habit of waking and sleeping. A short tunic, a kind of female monkey-jacket, of faded yellow satin edged with swansdown, and a cap of the same material, whose shape was borrowed from that worn by the Beefeaters, formed the upper portion of a dress, to which wide fur boots, with gold tassels, and a great hanging pocket, like a sabretasche, gave a false air of a military costume. "It was singular," she would remark, with a bland smile, "but very becoming!" Besides,

ited every clime. She used to come down to breakfast in it at dsor Castle; "the Queen liked it;" the Bey of Tripoli loved it; and Hospodar of Wallachia had one made for himself exactly from the rn. Her guests were the same party we have already introduced ur reader in the Villino Zoe—Haggerstone, the Pole, and Foglass, g the privileged few admitted into her august presence, and who to make up her whist-table, and offer their respectful homage on convalescence.

he Carnival was just over, the dull season of Lent had begun, and Ricketts' tea-table was a resource when nothing else offered. Such the argument of Haggerstone as he took a cheap dinner with Fo- at the Luna.

She's an infernal bore, Sir—that I know fully as well as you can m me—but please to tell me who isn't a bore?" Then he added, in ver voice, "Certainly it ain't *you!*"

Yes, yes—I agree with you," said Foglass; "she has reason to be about the Onslows' treatment."

I said a bore, Sir—not sore," screamed out Haggerstone.

Ha!" replied the other, not understanding the correction. "I re- ber one day, when Townsend——"

D—n Townsend!" said Haggerstone.

No, not Dan—Tom Townsend. That fellow who was always with hews."

Walk a little quicker, and you may talk as much balderdash as you se," said the other, buttoning up his coat, and resolving not to pay lightest attention to his companion's agreeability.

Who is here?" asked Haggerstone, as he followed the servant up stairs.

Nobody but Count Petrolaffsky, Sir."

Un Comte à bon compte," muttered Haggerstone to himself, always sed when he could be sarcastic, even in soliloquy. "They'll find it asy matter to get a tenant for this house now-a-days. Florence is g down, Sir, and will soon be little better than Boulogne-sur-Mer."

Very pleasant, indeed, for a month in summer," responded Foglass, had only caught up the last word. "Do you think of going ?"

Going there!" shouted out the other, in a voice that made miscon- ion impossible. "About as soon as I should take lodgings in Wap- for country air!"

his speech brought them to the door of the drawing-room, into h Haggerstone now entered, with that peculiar step which struck as combining the jaunty slide of a man of fashion with the martial l of an old soldier.

"Ha! my old adherents — all my faithful ones!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, giving a hand to each to kiss; and then, in a voice of deep emotion, she said, "Bless you both! May peace and happiness be beneath your roof-trees! Joy sit beside your hearth!"

Haggerstone reddened a little; for however alive to the ludicrous in his neighbours, he was marvellously sensitive as to having a part in the piece himself.

"You are looking quite yourself again," said he, bluntly.

"The soul, indeed, is unchanged; the spirit——"

"What's become of Purvis?" broke in Haggerstone, who never gave any quarter to these poetic flights.

"You'll see him presently. He has been so much fatigued and exhausted by this horrid police investigation, that he never gets up till late. I've put him on a course of dandelion, and aconite, too; the first effect of which is always unpleasant."

Leaving Foglass in conclave with the hostess, Haggerstone now approached the Count, who had four several times performed his toilet operation of running his hands through his hair, in expectation of being addressed.

"How d'ye do—any piquet lately?" asked the Colonel, half cavalierly.

"As if I was tinking of piquet, wid my country in shains! How you can aske me dat?"

"What did you do with Norwood t'other night?" resumed the other, in a voice somewhat lower.

"Won four hundred and fifty—but he no pay!"

"Nor ever will."

"What you say?—not pay me what I wins!"

"Not a sous of it."

"And dis you call English Noblemans—Pair d'Angleterre!"

"Hush! Don't be carried away by your feelings. Some men, Norwood won't pay, because he doesn't know them. There are others he treats the same way, because he *does* know them—very equitable, eh?"

The observation seemed more intelligible to the Pole than polite, for he bit his lip and was silent, while Haggerstone went on:

"He's gone, and that, at least, is a point gained; and now that these Onslows have left this, and that cur Jekyl, we may expect a little quietness for awhile at least; but here comes Purvis." And that worthy individual was led in on Martha's arm, a large green shade over his eyes, and his face plentifully sprinkled with flour.

"What's the matter with you, man? You're 'got up' like a ghost in a melodrama."

"They've taken all the cuti—cuti—cuti——"

l it skin, Sir, and go on."
-skin off my face with a lin—liniment," cried he, "and I could
am out with pain whenever I speak!"
m of marigolds, with the essential oil of crab-apple," said
"I made it myself."
sh to Hea—Heaven you had tr—tried it too," whispered he.
:her Scroope, you are ungrateful," said Mrs. Ricketts, with the
Judge, charging. "The vicissitudes of temperature, here, require
of astringents. The excessive heat of that police-court——"
:he way, how has that affair ended?" asked Haggerstone.
tell you," screamed out Purvis, in a burst of eagerness.
'e fi—fi—fined me a hundred and f—f—fifty scudi for being
:e I never was, and fighting somebody I n—never saw."
got off cheaply, Sir. I've known a man sentenced to the galleys
and with a better character to boot," muttered he to himself.
l Norwood and the rest said that I was a pr—pr—principal,
wore that he found me hiding in a cave."
did he so?"
; but it was only out of curi—curi—curi——"
osity, Sir, like other luxuries, must be paid for; and, as you
lutton, your appetite may be expensive to you."
mystery remains unsolved as to young Onslow, Colonel?" said
ketts, half in question.
lieve not, Madam. The explanation is very simple. The
Guardsman, having heard of Guilmard's skill, preferred being
'missing' to 'killed,' having previously arranged with Norwood
is place. The price was, I fancy, a smart one—some say five
, some call it ten. Whatever the amount, it has not been paid,
wood is furious."
the accident?"
r that, Madam, nothing more natural than to crack your skull
ı lose your head." And Haggerstone drew himself up with the
sciousness of his own smartness.
ı of course the poor young man is ruined?" observed Martha.
uld say so, Madam—utterly ruined. He may figure on the
se of a Polish Ball, but any other society would of course
a." This was said to obtain a sneer at Petrolaffsky, without
able to guess why. "I believe I may say, without much fear
adiction, that these Onslows were all humbugs! The old
wealth, my Lady's refinement, the Guardsman's spirit, were all
me category—downright humbugs!"
he hates us—how he detests the aristocracy," said Mrs Ricketts,
per to the Pole.

"And de Dalton—what of her?—is she millionaire?" asked Petrolaffsky.

"The father a small shopkeeper in Baden, Sir; children's toys, nutcrackers, and paper-knives being the staple of his riches. Foglass can tell you all about it. He wants to hear about those Daltons," screamed he into the deaf man's ear.

"Poor as Job—hasn't sixpence—lives 'three-pair back,' and dines for a 'zwanziger.' Lame daughter makes something by cutting heads for canes and umbrellas. He picks up a trifle about the hotels."

"Ach Gott! and I was so near be in loaf wid de sister!" muttered the Pole.

"She is likely to d—d—do better, Count," cackled in Purvis. "She's caught her Tartar—ha, ha, ha!"

"Midchikoff doesn't mean marriage, Sir, depend upon it," said Haggerstone.

"Martha, leave the room, my dear," said Mrs. Ricketts, bridling. "He could no more relish a pleasure without a vice, than he could dine without caviare."

"But they are be—be—betrothed," cried Purvis. "I saw a letter with an account of the ceremony. Mid—chikoff fitted up a beautiful chapel at his Villa, and there was a Greek priest came sp—special from M—M—M—Moscow——"

"I thought you were going to say from the Moon, Sir; and it would be almost as plausible," croaked Haggerstone.

"I saw the letter. It wasn't shown to me, but I saw it; and it was that woman from Breslau gave her away."

"What! old Madame Heidendorf? She has assisted at a great many similar ceremonies before, Sir."

"It was the Emperor sent her on purpose," cried Purvis, very angry at the disparagement of his history.

"In this unbelieving age, Sir, I must say that your fresh innocence is charming; but permit me to tell you that I know old Caroline Meersburg—she was sister of the fellow that stole the Archduke Michel's dress sword, at the court ball given for his birthday. I have known her five-and-thirty years. You must have met her, Madam, at Lubetskoy's, when he was Minister at Naples, the year after the battle of Marengo."

"I was wearing trousers with frills to them, and hunting butterflies at that time," said Mrs. Ricketts, with a great effort at a smile.

"I hav'n't a doubt of it, Madam." And then muttered to himself, "And if childishness mean youth, she will enjoy a perpetual spring!"

"The ceremony," resumed Purvis, very eager to relate his story,

"was dr—droll enough; they cut off a—a—a—lock of her hair, and tied it up with one of his."

"A good wig spoiled!" croaked Haggerstone.

"They then brought a b—b—b——"

"A baby, Sir."

"No, not a b—baby, a b—basin—a silver basin—and they poured water over both their hands."

"A ceremony by no means in accordance with Russian prejudices," chimed in Haggerstone. "They know far more of train oil and bears' fat than of brown Windsor!"

"Not the higher nobility, Colonel—not the people of rank," objected Mrs. Ricketts.

"There are none such, Madam. I have lived in intimacy with them all, from Alexander downwards. You may dress them how you please, but the Cossack is in the blood. Raw beef and red breeches are more than instincts with them; and, except the Poles, they are the dirtiest nation of Europe."

"What you say of Polen?" asked Petrolaffsky.

"That if oil could smooth down the acrimony of politics, you ought to be a happy people yet, Sir."

"And we are a great people dis minet. Hav'n't we Urednfrskioctsch, de best General in de world; and Krakouventkay, de greatest poet; and Vladoritski, de most distinguish pianist?"

"Keep them, Sir, with all their consonants; and Heaven give you luck with them," said Haggerstone, turning away.

"On Tuesday; no, We—Wednesday next they are to set out for St. P—P—Petersburg. And when the Emperor's leave is gr—granted, then Midchikoff is to follow; but not before."

"An de tyrant no grant de leave," said the Pole, gnashing his teeth and grasping an imaginary dagger in his wrath. "More like he send her to work in shains, wid my beautiful sister and my faders."

"He'll have more important matters to think of soon, Sir," said Haggerstone, authoritatively. "Europe is on the eve of a great convulsion. Some Kings and Kaisers will accept the Chiltern Hundreds before the year's out."

"Shall we be safe, Colonel, here? Ought Martha and I——"

"Have no fears, Madam; age commands respect, even from Huns and Croats. And were it otherwise, Madam, where would you fly to? France will have her own troubles, England has the income-tax, and Germany will rake up some old grievance of the Hohenstaufen, or the Emperor Conrad, and make it a charge against Prince Metternich and the Diet! It's a very rascally world altogether, and out of Tattersall's

yard I never expect to hear of honesty or good principles; and, *àpropos* to nothing, let us have some piquet, Count."

The table was soon got ready, and the players had just seated themselves, when the sound of carriage-wheels in the court attracted their attention.

"What can it mean, Scroope? Are you quite certain that you said I wouldn't receive to-night?"

"Yes; I told them what you b—bade me; that if the Archduke called——"

"There, you needn't repeat it," broke in Mrs. Ricketts, for certain indications around Haggerstone's mouth showed the sense of ridicule that was working within him.

"I suppose, Madam, you feel somewhat like poor Pauline, when she said that she was so beset with Kings and Kaisers she had never a moment left for good society?"

"You must say positively, Scroope, that I admit no one this evening."

"The Signor Morlache wishes to see you, Madam," said a servant. And close behind him, as he spoke, followed that bland personage, bowing gracefully to each as he entered.

"Sorry—most sorry—Madam, to intrude upon your presence; but the Prince Midchikoff desires to have a glance at the pictures and decorations before he goes away from Florence."

"Will you mention to him that to-morrow, in the afternoon, about five or——"

"He leaves this to-morrow morning, Madam; and if you could——"

But before the Jew could finish his request the door was flung wide, and the great Midchikoff entered, with his hands in his coat-pockets, and his glass in one eye. He sauntered into the room with a most profound unconsciousness that there were people in it. Not a glance did he even bestow on the living figures of the scene, nor did a trait of his manner evince any knowledge of their presence. Ranging his eyes over the walls and the ceilings, he neither noticed the martial attitude of Haggerstone, or the graceful undulations by which Mrs. Ricketts was, as it were, rehearsing a curtsey before him.

"Originals, but all poor things, Morlache," said the Prince. And, really, the observation seemed as though uttered of the company rather than the pictures.

"Mrs. Ricketts has been good enough, your Highness——" began the Jew.

"Give her a Napoleon," said he, listlessly; and turned away.

"My sister, Mrs. Ricketts—Mrs. M—M—Montague Ricketts," began Scroope, whose habitual timidity gave way under the extremity of pro-

vocation. And the Prince turned slowly round, and surveyed the speaker and the imposing form that loomed behind him.

"Tell them that I don't mean to keep any establishment here, Morlache." And with this he strolled on, and passed into another room, while, like as in a tableau, the others stood speechless with rage and indignation.

"He took you for the housekeeper, Ma'am," said Haggerstone, standing up with his back to the fire—"and a housekeeper out of place!"

"Martha, where's the General? Where is he, I say?" cried Mrs. Ricketts, furious with passion.

"He went to bed at nine," whispered Martha. "He thought, by rising early to-morrow, to finish the attack on Utrecht before night."

"You are as great a fool as himself. Scroope, come here. You must follow that Russian. You must tell him the gross rudeness——"

"I be ha—ha—hanged if I do. I've had enough of rows for one winter, at least. I'll not get into another sc—scrape, if I can help it."

"I'm sorry, Madam, that I cannot offer you my services," said Haggerstone; "but I never meddle in a quarrel which can be made a subject of ridicule. Mr. Foglass, I'm certain, has no such scruple."

"The Prince appears a very agreeable man," said the ex-Consul, who, not having the slightest notion of what was passing, merely followed his instincts of praising the person of high rank.

"De shains of my enslaved country is on my hands. I'm tied like one gallerien!" said Petrolaffsky, in a voice guttural with emotion.

"Your pardon once more, Madam," said Morlache, slipping into the chamber, and noiselessly approaching Mrs. Ricketts' chair. "The Prince will take everything—pictures, plate, china, and books. I hope to-morrow, at noon, will not inconvenience you to leave this——"

"To-morrow! Impossible, Sir. Perfectly impossible."

"In that case, Madam, we must make some arrangement as to rent. His Highness leaves all to me, and I will endeavour to meet your wishes in every respect. Shall we say two thousand francs a month for the present?" Without waiting for any reply, he turned to the Pole, and whispered, "He'll take you back again. He wants a Chasseur, to send to St. Petersburg. Come over to me in the morning, about ten. Mr. Foglass," cried he, in a loud voice, "when you write to London, will you mention that the varnish on the Prince's drosky doesn't stand the cold of Russia, and that they must try some other plan with the barouche. Your brother is an ingenious fellow, and he'll hit upon something. Colonel Haggerstone, the Prince didn't return your call. He says you will guess the reason when he says that he was in Palermo in a certain year you know of. I wish the honourable company good

night," said he, bowing with a deference almost submissive, and backing out of the room as he spoke.

And with him we also take our leave of them. They were like the chance passengers we meet on the road of a journey, with whom we converse when near, and forget when we separate from. Were we not more interested for the actors than the scenes on which they "strut their hour," we might yet linger a few moments on the spot so bound up with our memory of Kate Dalton—the terrace where she sat, the little orangery where she loitered of a morning, the window where she read, and dreamed of that bright future, so much nearer to her grasp than she knew of! There they were all!—destined to feel new influences and know other footsteps, for she had left them for ever, and gone forth upon her "Path" in life.

CHAPTER II.

A PACKAGE OF LETTERS.

It was a bright clear morning in May. A somewhat late spring had retarded vegetation, and the blossoming fruit-trees now added their gorgeous beauty to the warmer tints of coming summer. We are once more in Baden; but how different is it from what we saw it last. The frozen fountains now plash, and hiss, and sparkle in the sun. The trim alleys are flanked by the yellow crocus and the daffodil; the spray-like foliage of the ash is flecking the sunlight on the merry river, along whose banks the cheering sound of pleasant voices mingles with the carol of a thousand birds. The windows are open, and gay balconies are spreading, and orange-trees unfolding their sweetness to the breezy air. All is life, and motion, and joy, for the winter is passed, and nothing remains of it save the snow-peaks on some distant mountains, and even they are glowing in brilliant contrast with the deep blue sky beyond them.

Lovely as the valley is in summer or autumn, it is only in spring its perfect beauty appears. The sudden burst of vegetation—the rapid transition from the frost-bound durance of winter to the life and lightness of the young season, have a most exciting and exhilarating effect. This seemed conspicuous enough in the inhabitants as they chatted merrily in the streets, or met each other with pleasant greetings. It was the hour of the post arriving, and around the little window of the office were gathered the chief celebrities of the village—the principal hotel-keepers, curious to learn what tidings their correspondents gave of

the prospects for the coming summer. Everything appeared to smile on that happy moment, for as the various letters were opened, each had some good news to tell his neighbours—now, of some great English Lord; now, of some Hungarian magnate, or Russian Prince, that was to make Baden his residence for the summer. "The Cour de Bade is all taken," said one; "There will not be a room free in all the Adler;" "The Swan must refuse the Queen of Naples,"—such were the rumours that fell from lip to lip as in hearty congratulation they talked over their good fortune.

One figure only of the assembled group seemed excepted from the general joy. He was a large elderly man, who in a patched and threadbare surtout, with a coarse scarlet muffler round his throat, appeared either distrustful of the mild season, or unprovided with any change of costume to enjoy it. Seated on a stone bench in front of the window of the post-office, with an arm on each knee, and his head bent heavily forward, he never seemed to notice what went forward, nor hear one syllable of the joyous recognitions about him.

The crowd at last dispersed; the happy recipients of good news were turning homewards, and only one or two still lingered around the spot, when the old man arose and approached the window. There was something almost of shame in the way he slouched his hat over his eyes as he drew nigh and knocked timidly at the closed pane.

His summons was unheard, and yet for some time he did not repeat it —perhaps he loved better to feed his hope even these short few moments than again fall back into the dark gloom of his despair! At last, and with a deep hollow sigh, he tapped again.

"Have you anything for the name of Dalton—Peter Dalton?" asked he, in a voice wherein scarcely an accent revealed the once high-hearted nature.

"Nothing," was the curt rejoinder; and the window was slammed to with impatience.

He grasped the iron railing with a convulsive grip, as though a sudden pang had shot through him, and then, by a great effort, he drew himself up to his full height; his pale and haggard face grew paler as he turned it upwards, and his bloodless lips trembled as they muttered some indistinct syllables; then turning about, he brushed abruptly past the few who stood around, and walked away.

He had not gone many paces, when a boy overtook him, saying, "Come back, Sir; the postmaster has two letters for you."

Dalton looked stealthily at either side, to be sure that the speech was addressed to him, and with a fierceness that startled the boy, said, "You're certain they're for me?"

"Yes, yes; all right—here they are," cried the postmaster from the

window. "One, a soldier's letter from Munich, and free. The other is a heavier packet, and costs four florins and twelve kreutzers."

"I must be satisfied with this one, then," said Dalton, "till I go back for money. I brought no change out with me."

"No matter; you can send it," said the other.

"Maybe it's not so easy as you think," muttered Dalton to himself; while he added, aloud, "Very well, I'll do so, and thank you." And he clutched the two letters, and pressed them to his bosom.

With hurried steps he now paced homeward, but, stopping at every instant, he drew forth the packets, to gaze on them, and be certain that no self-deception was over him, and that his possession was real and tangible. His gait grew more firm as he went, and his tread, as he mounted the stair, sounded assured and steady.

"You have a letter, Father, dearest," cried Nelly, as she flung wide the door. "I saw you crossing the Platz, and I know, from your walk, that you've got one."

"No, but better, Nelly—I've two. That's from Frank; and here's Kate's, and a bulky one—four florins twelve—devil a less."

"Oh, give it to me! Let me hear of her—let me feel beside her once again," cried Nelly. And with bursting eagerness she tore open the envelope, from which two or three sealed notes fell out. "This is from Lady Hester," said she; "and this, a hand I do not know, but addressed to you; and here are bills or money orders for a large sum. What can all this mean?"

"Can't you read what she says?" said Dalton, reddening, and suddenly remembering that Nelly was not aware of his having written to Kate. "Give it to me, I'll read it myself." And he snatched the letter from her fingers. "There's Frank's for you."

"Oh, Father, Father!" cried Nelly, in a burst of grief, as she tore open Lady Hester's letter; "it is as I feared. Kate is about to be married—if she be not already married."

"Without my leave—without asking my consent!" cried Dalton, passionately. "Am I nobody at all? Am I the head of the family, or am I not? Is this the way to treat her father? May I never see light, if I won't have him 'out,'—if he was a Prince of the Blood! Oh, the ungrateful girl! Leave off crying there, and tell me all about it. Read me her own letter, I say—if God will give me patience to listen to it."

With a bosom almost bursting, and a lip quivering with emotion, Ell[illegible]

"La Rocca, Lake of Como.

[illegible] AND SISTER,—Oh that I could throw myself at [illegible] heart is full of—tell you what I feel,

and hope, and fear, and ask your counsel and your blessing. I know not if the last few days be real; my poor head is turning amid the scenes I've passed through, and the emotions I have felt. I had no friend but Lady Hester—no adviser but her! She has been a mother to me—not as you would have been, Nelly—not to warn and restrain, when perhaps both were needed, but to encourage and feed my hopes. I yielded to her counsels——"

"I don't understand one word of this," cried Dalton, impatiently. "What did she do?"

Nelly's eyes ran rapidly over the lines without speaking, and then in a low, but distinct voice, she said,

"It is as I said; she is betrothed to this great Russian Prince."

"That fellow, they say, owns half Moscow. Fogles told us about him."

"Prince Midchikoff."

"That's the name. Well, it's a fine match—there's no denying it. How did it come about? and why didn't he come here and ask my consent? What's the meaning of doing it, all in this hurry?"

"The marriage can only take place in St. Petersburg, and in presence of the Emperor; and she is merely betrothed at present, to enable her to accompany the lady, Madame de Heidendorf, to Russia, where the Prince will follow in a few weeks."

"That bangs Banagher! Why couldn't they get a priest where they are? Be gorra! they've scruples about everything but *me!* *I'm* the only one that's not considered! What the devil is the Emperor to her —sure *he* isn't her father? Well, well, go on."

"She would seem to have yielded to persuasion," said Nelly, feelingly. "The Prince, with all his greatness, appears not to have won her heart. See how she dwells upon his immense wealth, and the splendour of his position."

"Let us hear about that," cried Dalton, eagerly.

"My heart is nigh to bursting when I think of you and dearest Nelly living with me, in all the enjoyment that riches can bestow, nothing denied you that you can fancy, and free to indulge every taste and every wish. To know that I can at last repay, in some sort, all your affection—that, poor worthless Kate can minister to your pleasure and your comfort—would make me dare a rasher destiny than this. And he is so generous, Nelly. The whole of yesterday was like a page from the 'Arabian Nights,' as I sat surrounded with gorgeous articles of gold and gems—diamonds such as a Queen might wear, and rubies larger than the glass-drops I used to deck my hair with long ago! And yet they tell me I have seen nothing as yet, and that the treasure of the Vladovitch Palace, I hear of at every moment, are greater than

most royal houses. Lady Hester is kinder than ever, and the Heidendorf is, also; but she is cold and reserved—too stately for my taste—and I cannot overcome my awe of her. Is not this like a confession of my unfitness for the station I am to occupy?—are not these signs of inferiority? How little Hans would stare at the objects of taste and art by which I am surrounded, and of which I never tire in admiring.

"There have been great changes in this family since I wrote, and some mysterious circumstance is now hanging over them; but Lady Hester has not told me anything, nor do I care to repeat rumours which reach me through others. I only know that Sir Stafford is about to proceed to England as soon as Captain Onslow's health will permit; he, poor fellow, met with an accident on the day we left Florence, and my maid, who sat in the rumble, saw the mishap without knowing or suspecting the victim! I have done everything to obtain leave to visit you before I set out, or even to see you on my way; but Madame de Heidendorf is absolute, and she has so much important business in hand—such deep political affairs to transact at Vienna and Dresden—that I find it is impossible.

"The Prince has promised to write at once about Frank. He says it will be better to obtain his promotion in the Austrian service before he enters the Russian; and that this shall take place immediately. I could see that on this point he was acutely alive to the fact of our humble position; but he knows from Lady Hester all about our family, and that the Daltons acknowledge nothing superior to them in birth. This, however, is always a difficulty to a foreigner; they have no idea of untitled nobility; and I saw his chagrin the other day, when I told him to address Papa as plain Monsieur. Since yesterday morning I am called Princess; and I cannot conceal from you the throb of delight the sound still gives me! I often stop to ask myself if this be all a dream, and shall I awake beside the fire and see dearest Nelly bending over some little group, and Hans with wondering eyes staring over her shoulder!

"The Prince only intends to spend one winter in Russia. Madame de Heidendorf says that he will be named Ambassador at Paris; but I hope and trust not: I feel too acutely my inferiority for such a position. This she laughs at, and merely says, 'Nous verrons.' Of course, wherever I am, you will both be with me; meanwhile, what would you wish to do? I told Monsieur Rubion, the Prince's Secretary, that I wanted money, and he gave me these bills, so he called them, on Baden and Carlsruhe, as easily negotiable in that neighbourhood; pray, say if they be serviceable. The Prince intends to visit you at Baden; and I suppose you will like to see him. His manners are perfect, and, except a degree of constraint in first acquaintance, he is generally thought very agreeable. Such preparations as they are making for my journey, you'd

fancy I was a Queen at the very least. All my *trousseau* is to come from Paris direct; and up to this I have merely what Madame de H. calls the strictly 'indispensable;' which, shall I own, contrives to fill two large fourgons and a heavy travelling-carriage. Nina is in a perfect ecstasy at everything, and is eternally 'draping' me in Brussels lace and Chantilly; so that, even while I write, these flimsy tissues are floating around me; while caskets of jewels and precious gems dazzle my eyes wherever I turn them.

"The whole is like a gorgeous vision; would that it might remain ever thus, for I almost tremble to take a step further. Are these unworthy fears? I hope they are!" Nelly paused, and laid down the letter on her knee.

"Well, may I never see 'Grace,' if that letter isn't enough to confuse a Bench of Bishops!" cried Dalton. "She's marrying the first man in Europe—be the other who he will,—and she has as many crotchets and misgivings about it as if was little Hans, there, below! And he a Prince! a real Prince! devil a doubt of it, that scatters the money about like chaff. Here's an order at sight for nine hundred gulden; and here's a bill at ten days—a nice date—for fourteen hundred and eighty-six Prussian dollars; and this is nearly as much more. Kate, my beauty, I knew you'd do it! I never looked at you, in your old clogs and the worsted cloak, that I didn't think of the day I'd see you in satin and velvet! Faix! it's the best bottle of claret in the Adler I'll drink your health in, this day! Nelly, who will we ask in to dinner?"

"Don't you think, Papa, it were better we should not speak of this——"

"Why, better? Are we ashamed of it?"

"I mean more prudent as regards ourselves, and more respectful to the Prince."

"Respectful—to my son-in-law!—that's 'more of it.' Upon my conscience I'll have to go to school again in my old days. I know nothing of life at all, at all! Respect, indeed!"

"I would but suggest, Papa, that for Kate's sake——"

"There—there—don't provoke me. I never set my heart on a thing yet—big or little—that I wasn't met with a caution about this, or a warning about that, till at last I got so tutored, and corrected, and trained, that, as Billy Morris used to say at whist, 'I dread a good hand more than a bad one.'"

"Far be it from me, dearest Father," said Nelly, smiling, "to throw a shadow over a bright moment. If it will give you pleasure——"

"Sure I said it would—sure I told you 'tis what I'd like. A fine dinner at the 'Schwan'—four gulden a head, without wine—a dozen

of champagne in ice—hock for them that can drink it—and port and Lafitte for Peter Dalton, and men of his own sentiments. There's the program, Nelly, and you'll see if I can't fill up the details."

"Well, but we have yet much to do; here are several letters—here is Frank's. Let us learn how the dear fellow fares."

Dalton sat down without speaking; there was, indeed, more of resignation than curiosity in his features, as he crossed his arms and listened.

"DEAREST NELLY,—I only heard a few days ago that my two last letters had been stopped; they were not, as they should have been, submitted to my Captain to read, and hence they were arrested and suppressed. This goes by a private hand—a friend of mine—a Pedlar from Donaueschingen——"

"A what?—a Pedlar is it?" broke in Dalton, angrily.

"Yes, Papa; remember that poor Frank is still in the ranks."

"Well, God give me patience with you all!" burst out the old man, in a torrent of passion. "Does he know that he's a Dalton?—does he feel blood in his veins? Why the blazes must he seek out a thieving blaguard with a pack full of damaged cambric to make a friend of? Is this the way the family's getting up in the world?"

"Adolf Brawer, by name," read on Nelly, in a low and subdued voice. "You will be surprised when I tell you that I owe all his kindness and good-nature to you—yes, to your own dear self. On his way through the Tyrol he had bought two wooden statuettes—one, a young soldier asleep beside a well; the other, a girl leaning from a window to hear the bugles of a departing regiment. Can you guess whose they were? And when he came to know that I was the brother of the little N. D., that was sculptured, half-hid in a corner, and that I was the original of the tired, wayworn recruit on the roadside, I thought he would have cried with enthusiasm."

"Didn't I often say it?" broke in Dalton, as, ringing his hands in despair, he paced the room with hasty strides. "Didn't I warn you a thousand times about them blasted images, and tell you that, sooner or later, it would get about who made them? Didn't I caution you about the disgrace you'd bring on us? The fear of this was over me this many a day. I had it like a dream on my mind, and I used to say to myself it will all come out yet."

Nelly covered her face with her apron as these bitter words were spoken; but not a syllable, nor a sigh, did she reply to them; still the frail garment shook with an emotion that showed how intensely she suffered.

"A virgin sold here—an angel Gabriel there; now it was Hamlet

—another time Goötz with the iron hand. All the balderdash that ever came into your head scattered over the world to bring shame on us! And then to think of Kate!"

"Yes, dearest Father, do think of her," cried Nelly, passionately; "she is, indeed, an honour and a credit to you."

"And so might you have been too, Nelly," rejoined he, half sorry for his burst of anger. "I'm sure I never made any difference between you. I treated you all alike, God knows." And truly, if an indiscriminating selfishness could plead for him, the apology was admirable.

"Yes, Papa; but Nature was less generous," said Nelly, smiling through her tears; and she again turned to the letter before her. As if fearful to revive the unhappy discussion, she passed rapidly over Frank's account of his friend's ecstasy, nor did she read aloud till she came to the boy's narrative of his own fortunes.

"You ask me about Count Stephen, and the answer is a short one. I have seen him only once. Our battalion, which was stationed at Laybach, only arrived in Vienna about three weeks ago, but feeling it a duty to wait on our relative, I obtained leave one evening to go and pay my respects. Adolf, who knew of my connexion with the Field-Marshal, had lent me 200 florins; and this, too, I was anxious to pay off—another reason for this visit.

"Well, I dressed myself in my best cadet cloth and silk sword-knot, Nelly—none of your 'commissaire' toggery, but all fine and smart-looking, as a gentleman-cadet ought to be, and then calling a fiacre, I ordered the man to drive to the 'Koertnor Thor,' to the Field-Marshal von Auersberg's quarters. I'm not sure if I didn't say to my uncle's. Away we went gaily, and soon drew up in an old-fashioned court-yard, from which a great stair led up four stories high, at the top of which the 'Feld'—so they called him—resided. This was somewhat of a come down to my high-flown expectations, but nothing to what I felt as the door was opened by an old Jäger with one leg, instead of, as I looked for, a lackey in a grand livery.

"'What is't, Cadet?' said he, in a tone of the coolest familiarity.

"'The Field-Marshal von Auersberg lives here?' said I.

"He nodded.

"'I wish to see him.'

"He shook his head gravely, and scanning me from head to foot, said, 'Not at this hour, Cadet—not at this hour.'

"'Let him see this card,' said I, giving one with my name. 'I'm certain he'll receive me.'

"I believe if I had presented a pistol at him, the old fellow would have been less startled, as he exclaimed, 'A Cadet with a visiting card!

This would serve you little with the Feld, younker,' cried he, handing it back to me; 'he likes to see a soldier, a soldier.'

"'Tell him my name, then,' said I, angrily; 'say that his grand-nephew, Frank Dalton, has been standing at his door in full parley with a servant for ten minutes.'

"The announcement created little of the astonishment I calculated on, and the old soldier merely replied, 'All under Field-Officer's rank come before eight of a morning. You cannot expect to have the privilege of an Archduke.' He was about to close the door in my face as he spoke, but I placed my shoulder against it and forced it back, thus securing an entrance within the forbidden precincts.

"'Right about, quick march!' cried he, pointing to the door, while his whole frame trembled with passion.

"'Not till you have delivered my message,' said I, calmly.

"'Then Bey'm Blitzen I will deliver it, and see how you'll like it,' cried he, as he stumped away down a passage and entered a room at the end of it. I could soon hear the sound of voices, and for a moment I was almost determined to beat a retreat, when suddenly the old Jäger came out and beckoned me forward. There was a grin of most diabolical delight on the old fellow's features, as I passed into the room and closed the door behind me.

"As well as I could see in the imperfect light, for it was after sunset, the apartment was large and low-ceilinged, with bookshelves round the walls, and stands for weapons and military equipments here and there through it. At the stove, and busily engaged in watching a coffee-pot, sat the Feld himself, a loose grey overcoat covering his figure, and concealing all of him but two immense jack-boots that peeped out beneath. He wore a mütze, a kind of Hungarian cap, and a long pipe depended from his mouth, the bowl resting on the carpet. The most conspicuous feature of all, was, however, his enormous moustache, which, white as snow, touched his collar-bone at either side.

"He never spoke a word as I entered, but stared at me steadfastly and sternly for full three or four minutes. Half abashed by this scrutiny, and indignant besides at the reception, I was about to advance towards him, when he called out, as if on parade, 'Halt! What regiment, Cadet?'

"'Franz Carl Infantry, third battalion,' said I, instantly saluting with my hand.

"'Your name?'

"'Frank Dalton.'

"'Your business?'

"'To visit my grand-uncle, the Field-Marshal von Auersberg.'

"'And is it thus, younker,' cried he, rising, and drawing himself up to his full height, 'that you dare to present yourself before a Feldzeugmeister of the Imperial Army? Have they not taught you even the commonest rules of discipline? Have they left you in the native barbarism of your own savage country, that you dare, against my orders, present yourself before me?'

"'I thought the claim of kindred——' began I.

"'What know I of kindred, Sirrah? What have kith and kin availed me? I have stood alone in the world. It was not to kindred I owed my life on the field of Rosbach; nor was it a relative stanched my bleeding wounds at Wagram!'

"'The name of Dalton——'

"'I have won a prouder one, Sir, and would not be reminded by you from what I've started. Where's your character-certificate?'

"'I have not brought it with me, Herr General. I scarcely thought it would be the first question my father's uncle would put to me.'

"'There was prudence in the omission, too, Sir,' said he, not heeding my remark. 'But I have it here.' And he drew from a portfolio on the table a small slip of paper, and read: '"Cadet Dalton, second company of the third battalion, Franz Carl Regiment.—Smart on service, and quick in discipline, but forward and petulant with those above him in rank. Disposed to pride himself on birth and fortune, and not sufficiently submissive to orders. Twice in arrest, once, Kurzgeschlossen." A creditable character, Sir! Twice in arrest, and once in irons! And with this you claim kindred with a Count of the Empire, and an Imperial Field-Marshal! On the fifth of last month you entertained a party at dinner at the Wilde Man—most of them men of high rank and large fortune. On the eighteenth you drove through Maria Tell with a team of four horses, and passed the drawbridge and the moat in full gallop. So late as Wednesday last you hoisted a green flag on the steeple of the village church, on pretence of honouring your father's birthday. I know each incident of your career, Sir, and have watched you with shame and regret. Tell your father, when you write to him, that all the favour of my august master would not endure the test of two such protegés. And now, back to your quarters.'

"He motioned me to retire with a gesture, and I fell back, almost glad at any cost to escape. I had just reached the stair, when the Jäger called me back to his presence.

"'Art an only son?' asked the Count, for the first time addressing me in the second person.

"I bowed.

"'And hast three sisters?'

"'Two, Herr General.'

"'Older, or younger than thyself?'

"'Both older, Sir.'

"'How have they been brought up? Have they learned thrift, and housecraft; or are they wasteful, and reckless, as their native country and their name would bespeak them?'

"'Our humble fortune is the best answer to that question, Sir.'

"'It is not, Sirrah,' cried he, angrily. 'The spendthrift habit survives every remnant of the state that gave it birth, and the Beggar can be as improvident as the Prince. Go; thou hast as much to learn of the world as of thy duty. Head erect, Sir; shoulders back; the right thumb more forwards. If the rest of the battalion be like thee, I'll give them some work on the Prater ere long.'

"A haughty wave of his hand now finished our interview, and, once outside the door, I descended the stairs, a whole flight at every bound, in terror lest anything should induce him to recal me.

"And this is uncle Stephen, Nelly—this the great protector we used to build our hopes upon, and flatter ourselves would be a second father to us!

"When I came out into the street, I knew not which way to turn. I dreaded the very sight of a comrade, lest he should ask me about our meeting, what pocket-money he had given me, and how soon I should be an officer. It was only when I saw Adolf coming towards me that I remembered all about my debt to him, of which I had not spoken one word to my uncle. I ought to have told him so, frankly. Yes, Nelly, I can hear the murmured displeasure with which you read my confession, 'that I couldn't do it.' I was unequal to the effort, and could not bring myself to destroy that whole fabric of fictitious interest in which I had wrapped myself. What would Adolf have thought of me when I said, I have neither wealth, nor station, nor prospect—as humble a soldier as the sentry you see yonder? What would become of that romance of life in which we have so often spent hours revelling in a brilliant future, every incident of which grew up in our united fancies, and seemed to assume reality as we discussed it? Where—oh, Nelly! to you I must reveal all—every weakness, every littleness of my nature—where would be the homage of respect the poor Bursche was wont to show the nephew of a Field-Marshal? No, it was above my strength; and so I took his arm, and talked away heedlessly about our meeting, avoiding, where I could, all mention of my uncle, and but jocularly affecting to think him an original, whose strange, old-fashioned manners almost concealed the strong traits of family affection.

"'What of thy promotion, Frank?' asked Adolf.

"'It will come in its own good time,' said I, carelessly. 'Nothing

causes more dissatisfaction than the rapid advancement of Cadets of noble family.'

"'But they should make thee a Corporal, at least?'

"I laughed scornfully at the remark, and merely said, 'They may skip over the whole Sous-Officier-Grade, and only remember me when I'm to be made a Lieutenant.'

"'Thou hast grown haughtier, Frank,' said he, half-reproachfully, 'since thy meeting with the "Feld." Mayhap in a day or two thou wilt not like to be seen in company with a "Wander-Bursche?"'

'"I was bursting to throw my arms round his neck, and say, 'Never, whatever fortune have in store for me; thy friendship is like a brother's, and can never be forgotten;' but Pride—yes, Nelly, the cursed pride against which you used to warn me—sealed my lips; and when I spoke, it was something so cold, so meaningless, and so unworthy, that he left me. I know not how! No sooner was I alone, Nelly, than I burst into tears. I cried for very shame; and if agony could expiate my fault, mine should have done so. What humiliation before my friend could equal that I now felt before my own heart! I thought of all your teachings, dearest Nelly; of the lessons you gave me over and over against this besetting sin of my nature! I thought of our home, where poor Hanserl was treated by us as a friend! I thought of our last parting, and the words you spoke to me in warning against this very pride—ignoble and mean as it is; and oh! what would I have given to have thrown myself into Adolf's arms, and told him everything! I have never seen him since; he wrote to me a few lines, saying that he should pass through Baden on his way to Frankfort, and offering to carry a letter for me; but not once did he allude to my debt, nor was there the lightest hint of its existence. On this I wrote an acknowledgment of the loan, and a pressing entreaty that he would come and see me; but he pretended one thing and another; affected engagements at the only hours I was free; and at last abruptly sent for my letter just when I was writing it. I had much more to tell you, Nelly, of myself, of the service, and of my daily life here; but my thoughts are now disturbed and scattered; and I feel, too, how your shame for my shortcoming will take away interest from what I say. You, Nelly, will have courage to be just: tell him all that I have been weak enough to conceal; let him know what suffering my unworthy shame has cost me; and, above all, that I am not ungrateful.

"It seems like a dream all that you tell me of Kate. Is she still in Italy, and where? Would she write to me? I am ashamed to ask the question of herself. They spoke of our brigade being sent to Lombardy; but even there I might be far away from her; and if near, in the very

same city, our stations would separate us still more widely. Oh, Nelly! is it worth all the success, ever ambition, the most successful, won, thus to tear up the ties of family, and make brothers and sisters strangers? Would that I were back again with you, and dearest Kate, too! I see no future here; the dull round of daily discipline, teaching nothing but obedience, shuts out speculation and hope! Where are the glorious enterprises—the splendid chances I often dreamed of? My happiest moments now are recalling the past; the long winter evenings beside the hearth, while Hans was reading out to us. There are rumours of great changes in the world of Europe; but to us they are only the thunderings of a distant storm, to break out in what quarter we know not. Oh, Nelly! if it should lead to war! if some glorious struggle were to break in upon upon this sluggish apathy!

"Adolf has sent again for this letter, so I must close it. He will not, he says, pass through Baden, but will post this in Munich,—so good-by, dearest sister. Tell poor Papa all that you dare to tell of me; and farewell.

"FRANK DALTON.

"When you write, it must be under cover to the 'Herr Hauptman von Gauss, 2ten Compagnie, 3 Linien Batallion, Franz Carl Infanterie.' Don't forget this long address, nor add a line to the Captain himself, who is a good-looking fellow, but somewhat conceited.

"I have just heard old Auersberg is to have a command again. I'm heartily sorry for it. So much for family influence!"

If the reader's patience has lasted through this long letter of Frank's, it was more than Peter Dalton's did. For what between his ecstasy at Kate's good fortune, his own rambling speculations on all that should follow from it, and, above all, what from the slurring monotonous tone in which Nelly passed over such portions as she did not wish him to hear, he grew gradually more abstracted and dreamy, and at last fell off into a deep and most happy slumber. Not a syllable did he hear of the old Feld's reception of Frank, nor did he even awake as little Hans stumped into the room, with a staff in either hand, aids, that since his accident, he could never dispense with.

"I heard that you had letters, Fräulein, said he; "do they bring good tidings?"

"Some would call them so, Hanserl," said she, with a sigh. "Kate is about to be married."

Hanserl made no reply, but sat slowly down, and crossed his arms before him.

"The great Russian Prince Midchikoff, of whom you may have heard."

"I have seen him, Fräulein; he was here in Baden, three years ago."

"Oh, then tell me, Hanserl, what is he like? Is he young and frank-looking?—seems he one that should have won a maiden's heart so suddenly, that—that——"

"No, not that she couldn't have written to her sister and asked for counsel, Fräulein," said Hans, continuing her sentence. "The Prince is a cold, austere man, proud to his equals I believe, but familiar enough to such as me. I remember how he asked me of my life—where I came from, and how I lived. He seemed curious to hear about the train of thoughts suggested by living amid objects of such childish interest, and asked me 'If I did not often fancy that this mock world around me was the real one?' 'You are right, Herr Printz,' said I; 'but, after all, here at least we are equals.' 'How so?' said he. 'That *your* real world is as great a mockery as mine.' 'Thou are right, Dwarf,' said he, thoughtfully, and fell a musing. He should not have called me Dwarf, for men know me as Hans Roëckle—and this is your sister's husband!"

"Is he mild, and gentle-mannered?" asked Nelly, eagerly.

"The great are always so, so far as I have seen; none but base metal rings loudly, maiden. It is part of their pride to counterfeit humility."

"And his features, Hans?"

"Like one of those portraits in the gallery at Würtzburg. One who had passions and a temper for a feudal age, and was condemned to the slavery of our civilisation."

"He is much older than Kate?" asked she again.

"I have seen too few like him even to guess at his age; besides, men of his stamp begin life with old temperaments, and time wears them but little."

"Oh, Hanserl, this seems not to promise well. Kate's own nature is frank, generous, and impulsive; how will it consort with the cold traits of his?"

"She marries not for happiness, but for ambition, maiden. They who ascend the mountain-top to look down upon the scene below them, must not expect the sheltering softness of the valley at their feet. The Fräulein Kate, is beautiful, and she would have the homage that is paid to beauty. She has chosen her road in life; let us at least hope she knows how to tread it!"

There was a tone of almost sternness in Hanserl's manner that Nelly well knew boded deep and intense feeling, and she forbore to question him further for some time.

"You will leave this, then, Fräulein?" said he at last; "you will quit the humble valley for the great world?"

"I know not, Hanserl, what my father may decide. Kate speaks of our joining her in Russia; but the long journey, in his infirm state, not to speak of other reasons, may prevent this. Shall I tell you of Frank? Here is a long letter from him." And, almost without waiting for his reply, she read out the greater portion of the epistle.

"I like the old Feld!" cried Hans, enthusiastically. "He would teach the boy submission, and self-reliance too—lessons that, however wide apart they seem, go ever hand in hand;—an old warrior that has trained his bold nature to habits of obedience in many a year of trial and injustice, unfriended and alone, with nothing but his stout heart and good sword to sustain him. I like that Feld, and would gladly pledge him in a glass of Steinberger!"

"And you shall, my little man," said Dalton, waking up, and catching the last words of Hanserl's speech. "The old Count was kind to Frank, and I'll drink his health this night, with all the honours. Read him the letter, Nelly. Show him how old Stephen received the boy. That's blood for you!—a true Dalton!"

Hanserl stared from father to daughter, and back again, without speaking; while Nelly, blushing deeply, held down her head, without a word.

"His letter to us was dry enough. But what matter for that? He never wrote a line—maybe, didn't speak a word of English for upwards of forty years. You can't expect a man to have the 'Elegant Correspondent' at his fingers' ends after that space of time. But the heart!—that's the main point, Hans. The heart is in the right place. Read that bit over again, Nelly; I forget the words he said."

"Oh no, Papa. Hans has just heard it all, from beginning to end; and you know we have so much to do. Here's Lady Hester's note, and here's one from the Prince, still unopened."

"Ay, to be sure. I'm certain you'll excuse me, Hans," said Dalton, putting on his spectacles, while he assumed a manner of condescending urbanity very puzzling to the poor Dwarf. "Why, Nelly, dear, this is French. Give me that note of Lady Hester's, and do you take this. Oh! by my conscience I'm no better off now! The devil such writing as this ever I seen! It's all 'm's' and 'w's,' every bit of it. You'll keep them both for the evening, my dear. Hans will dine with us, and I'll go out to look for a bit of fish, and see if I can find another pleasant fellow to round off the table with us. God be with old Kilmurray M'Mahon, where I could have had twenty, as easy as two, and each of

them a good warrant for four bottles besides! Isn't it a droll world?" muttered he, as he took down his hat and descended the stairs. "A good dinner, and only a cripple for company! Faix! I'm like the chap in the Bible, that had to ask the beggars and the blaguards, when he couldn't get better." And with this very wise reflection Peter Dalton hummed a jig to himself as he took his way to the fish-market.

CHAPTER III.

A HAPPY DAY FOR PETER DALTON.

A YOUTHFUL heir never experienced a more glorious burst of delight on the morning of his twenty-first birthday, than did Peter Dalton feel as he sauntered down the principal street of Baden. It was with a step almost elastic, and his head high, that he went along; not humbly returning the "Good day" of the bowing shopkeeper, but condescendingly calling his worthy creditors—for such nearly all of them were—by their Christian names, he gave them to believe that he was still, as ever, their kind and generous Patron!

There was scarcely a shop or a stall he did not linger beside for a minute or two. Everywhere there was something not only which he liked, but actually needed. Never did wants accumulate so rapidly! With a comprehensive grasp they extended to every branch of trade and merchandise,—ranging from jewellery to gin, and taking in all, from fur slippers to sausages.

His first visit was to Abel Kraus, the Banker and money-lender—a little den, which often before he had entered with a craven heart and a sinking spirit, for Abel was a shrewd old Israelite, and seemed to read the very schedule of a man's debts in the wrinkles around his mouth. Dalton now unbarred the half door, and stalked in, as if he would carry the place by storm.

The man of money was munching his breakfast of hard eggs and black bread—the regulation full diet of misers in all Germany—when Peter cavalierly touched his hat, and sat down. Not a word did Abel speak. No courtesies about the season or the weather, the funds or the money-market, were worth bestowing on so poor a client, and so he ate on, scarcely deigning even a glance towards him.

"When you've done with the garlic, old boy, I've some work for you," said Dalton, crossing his arms pretentiously.

"But what if I do not accept your work? What, if I tell you that we shall have no more dealings together? The two last bills——"

"They'll be paid, Abel—they'll be paid. Don't put yourself in a passion. Times is improving—Ireland's looking up, man."

"I think she is," muttered the Jew, insolently; "she is looking up like the beggar that asks for alms, yonder."

"Tear and ages!" cried Dalton, with a stroke of his fist upon the table, that made every wooden bowl of gold and silver coin jump and ring again. "Tear and ages! take care what you say. By the soul in my body, if you say a syllable against the old country, I'll smash every stick in the place, and your own bones besides! Ye miserable ould Heathen! that hasn't a thought above sweating a guinea—how dare you do it?"

"Why, do you come into my counting-house to insult me, Saar? Why you come where no one ask you?"

"Is it waiting for an invitation I'd be, Abel; is it expecting a card with ould Kraus's compliments," said Dalton, laughing. "Sure, isn't the place open like the fish-market, or the bull-ring, or the chapel, or any place of divarsion! There, now; keep your temper, old boy. I tell ye, there's luck before ye! What dy'e think of that?" And, as he spoke, he drew forth one of the bills, and handed it across the counter; and then, after gloating as it were over the changed expression of the Jew's features, he handed a second, and a third.

"These are good papers, Herr von Dalton; no better! The exchange, too, is in your favour; we are giving—let me see—ten and three-eighths 'Convenzions-Gelt.'"

"To the devil I fling your three-eighths!" cried Dalton. "I never forgot the old song at school that says, 'Fractions drives me mad.'"

"Ah, always droll,—always merry!" cackled out Abel. "How will you have these monies?"

"In a bag,—a good strong canvas-bag!"

"Yes, to be sure, in a bag; but I was asking how you'd have them. I mean, in what coin,—in what for 'Gelt.'"

"Oh, that's it!" cried Dalton. "Well, give me a little of everything. Let me have 'Louis' to spend, and 'Groschen' to give the beggars. Bank-notes, too, I like; one feels no regret in parting with the dirty paper, that neither jingles nor shines: and a few crown pieces, Abel; the ring of them on a table is like a brass band!"

"So you shall—so you shall, Herr von Dalton. Ha! ha! ha! You are the only man ever make me laugh!"

"By my conscience, then, it's more than you deserve, Abel; for you've

very often nearly made *me* cry," said Dalton, with a little sigh over the past, as he recalled it to his memory.

The Jew did not either heed or hear the remark; for, having put away the remnant of his frugal breakfast, he now began a very intricate series of calculations respecting interest, and exchange, and commission, at which poor Dalton gazed in a most complete mystification.

"Fourteen hundred and sixty-three, at ten three-eighths—less cost of commission; I will not charge you the one per cent——"

"Charge all that's fair, and no favour, old boy."

"I mean, that I will not treat the Herr von Dalton like a stranger——"

"I was going to say, treat me like a Christian," said Dalton, laughing; "but maybe that's the most expensive thing going."

"Always droll,—always have his jest," cackled Abel. "Now there's an agio on gold, you pay five kreutzers for every Louis."

"By George, I'll take a ship load of them at the same price."

"Ha! I mean you pay that over the value," said the Jew.

"Faix! I often promised to pay more," said Dalton, sighing; "and what's worse, on stamped paper, too!"

As the Jew grew deeper in his figures, Dalton rambled on about Ireland and her prospects, for he wished it to be supposed that his present affluence was the long-expected remittance from his estates. "We'll get right yet," muttered he, "if they'll only give us time; but ye see, this is the way it is: we're like an overloaded beast that can't pull his cart through the mud, and then the English comes up, and thrashes us. By course, we get weaker and weaker—licking and abusing never made any one strong yet. At last down we come on our knees with a smash. Well, ye'd think, then, that anybody with a grain of sense would say, 'Take some of the load off the poor devil's back—ease him a bit till he gets strength.' Nothing of the kind. All they do is to tell us that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for falling—that every other people was doing well but ourselves—that it's a way we have of lying down, just to get somebody to pick us up, and such like. And the blaguard newspapers raises the cry against us, and devil a thief, or a housebreaker, or a highway robber they take, that they don't put him down in the police reports as a 'hulking Irishman,' or a 'native of the Emerald Isle.' 'Paddy Fitzsimons, or Peter O'Shea, was brought up this mornin' for cutting off his wife's head with a trowel. Molly Maguire was indicted for scraping her baby to death with an oyster-shell.' That's the best word they have for us! 'Ain't ye the plague of our lives?' they're always saying. 'Do ye ever give us a moment's peace?' And why the blazes don't ye send us adrift, then? Why don't ye let us take our

own road. We don't want your company—faix! we never found it too agreeable. It's come to that now, that it would better be a Hottentot or a Chinese than an Irishman! Oh dear, oh dear, but we're hardly treated!"

"Will you run your eye over that paper, Herr von Dalton, and see if it be all correct?" said Abel, handing him a very complex-looking array of figures.

"'Tis little the wiser I'll be when I do," muttered Dalton to himself, as he put on his spectacles and affected to consider the statement. "Fourteen hundred and sixty-three—I wish they were pounds, but they're only florins—and two thousand eight hundred and twenty-one—five and two is seven and nine is fifteen. No, seven and nine is—I wish Nelly was here. Bad luck to the multiplication-table. I used to be licked for it every day when I was a boy, and it's been a curse to me since I was a man. Seven and nine is fourteen, or thereabouts—a figure wouldn't signify much, one way or t'other. Interest at three-quarters for twenty-one days—there I'm done complete! Out of the four first rules in Gough I'm a child, and indeed, to tell the truth, I'm no great things after subtraction."

"You will perceive that I make the charges for postage, commission, and any other expenses, in one sum. This little claim of fifty-eight florins covers all."

"Well, and reasonable it is, that I must say," cried Dalton, who, looking at the whole as a lucky windfall, was by no means indisposed to see others share in the good fortune. "How much is coming to me, Abel?"

"Your total balance is four thousand two hundred and twenty-seven florins eight kreutzers, Müntze," said Abel, giving the sum a resonance of voice highly imposing and impressive.

"How many pounds is that, now?" asked Peter.

"Something over three hundred and fifty pounds sterling, Sir."

"Is it? Faith! a neat little sum. Not but I often got rid of as much of an evening at blind-hookey, with Old Carters, of the 'Queen Bays.' Ye don't know Carters? Faix! and ye'd be the very man he would know, if ye were in the same neighbourhood. I wish he was here to-day; and that reminds me that I must go over to the market, and see what's to be had. Ye don't happen to know if there's any fish to-day?"

Abel could not answer this important question, but offered to send his servant to inquire; but Dalton, declining the attention, strolled out into the street, jingling his Napoleons in his pocket as he went, and feeling all the importance and self-respect that a well-filled purse

confers on him who has long known the penniless straits of poverty. He owed something on every side of him; but he could bear to face his creditors, now: he was neither obliged to be occupied with a letter, or sunk in a fit of abstraction as he passed them; nay, he was even jocular and familiar, and ventured to criticise the wares for which, once, he was almost grateful.

"Send your boy down to the house for some money—ye needn't mind the bill; but I'll give you fifty florins.—There's a trifle on account.—Put them ten Naps to my credit; that will wipe off some of our scores; it's good for forty crowns." Such were the brief sentences that he addressed to the amazed shopkeepers, as he passed along; for Peter, like Louis Philippe, couldn't bear the sight of an account, and always paid something in liquidation. It was with great reluctance that he abstained from inviting each of them to dinner; nothing but his fear of displeasing Nelly could have restrained him. He would have asked the whole village if he dared, and aye made them drunk too, if they'd have let him. "She's so high in her notions," he kept muttering to himself; "that confounded pride about family, and the like! Well, thank God! I never had that failing. If I knew we were better than other people, it never made me unneighbourly; I was always free and affable; my worst enemy couldn't say other of me. I'd like to have these poor devils to dinner, and give them a skinful for once in their lives, just to drink Kate's health, and Frank's: they'd think of the Daltons for many a long year to come—the good old Dalton blood, that never mixed with the puddle! What a heavenly day it is! and an elegant fine market. There's a bit of roasting beef would feed a dozen; and maybe that isn't a fine trout! Well, well, but them's cauliflowers! Chickens and ducks—chickens and ducks—a whole street of them! And there's a wild turkey—mighty good eating, too! and venison!—ah! but it hasn't the flavour, nor the fat! Faix! and not bad either, a neck of mutton with onions, if one had a tumbler of whisky-punch afterwards."

Thus communing with himself, he passed along, totally inattentive to the solicitations of those who usually supplied the humble wants of his household, and who now sought to tempt him by morsels whose merits lay rather in frugality than good cheer.

As Dalton drew near his own door he heard the sounds of a stranger's voice from within. Many a time a similar warning had apprised him that some troublesome dun had gained admittance, and was torturing poor Nelly with his importunities; and on these occasions Peter was wont, with more cunning than kindness, to steal noiselessly down

stairs again, and wait till the enemy had evacuated the fortress. Now, however, a change had come over his fortunes, and with his hat set jauntily on one side, and his hands stuck carelessly in his pockets, he kicked open the door with his foot, and entered.

Nelly was seated near the stove, in conversation with a man, who, in evident respect, had taken his place near the door, and from which he rose, to salute Dalton as he came in. The traveller—for such his "blouse" or travelling-frock showed him to be, as well as the knapsack and stick at his feet—was a hale, fresh-looking man of about thirty; his appearance denoting an humble walk in life, but with nothing that bordered on poverty.

"Herr Brawer, Papa—Adolf Brawer," said Nelly, whispering the last words, to remind him more quickly of the name.

"Servant, Sir," said Dalton, condescendingly; for the profound deference of the stranger's manner at once suggested to him their relative conditions.

"I kiss your hand," said Adolf, with the respectful salutation of a thorough Austrian, while he bowed again with even deeper humility.

"The worthy man who was so kind to Frank, Papa," said Nelly, in deep confusion, as she saw the scrutinising and almost depreciating look with which Dalton regarded him.

"Oh, the Pedlar!" said Dalton, at last, as the remembrance flashed on him. "This is the Pedlar, then?"

"Yes, Papa. He came out of his way, from Durlach, just to tell us about Frank; to say how tall he had grown—taller than himself, he says—and so good-looking, too. It was so kind in him."

"Oh, very kind, no doubt of it—very kind, indeed!" said Dalton, with a laugh of most dubious expression. "Did he say nothing of Frank's debt to him? Hasn't that I O you were talking to me about anything to say to this visit?"

"He never spoke of it—never alluded to it," cried she, eagerly.

"Maybe he won't be so delicate with *me*," said Dalton. "Sit down, Mr. Brawer; make no ceremony here. We're stopping in this little place till our house is got ready for us. So you saw Frank, and he's looking well?"

"The finest youth in the regiment. They know him through all Vienna as the 'Handsome Cadet.'"

"And so gentle-mannered and unaffected," cried Kate.

"Kind and civil to his inferiors?" said Dalton; "I hope he's that?"

"He condescended to know *me*," said Brawer, "and call me his friend."

"Well, and maybe ye were," said Peter, with a majestic wave of the hand. "A real born gentleman, as Frank is, may take a beggar off the streets and be intimate with him. Them's my sentiments. Mark what I say, Mr. Brawer, and you'll find, as you go through life, if it isn't true; good blood may mix with the puddle every day of the year and not be the worse of it!"

"Frank is so grateful to you," broke in Nelly, eagerly; "and we are so grateful for all your kindness to him!"

"What an honour to *me!* that he should so speak of me!" said the Pedlar, feelingly—"I, who had no claim upon his memory!"

"There was a trifle of money between you, I think," said Dalton, ostentatiously; "have you any notion of what it is?"

"I came not here to collect a debt, Herr von Dalton," said Adolf, rising, and assuming a look of almost fierceness in his pride.

"Very well—very well; just as you please," said Dalton, carelessly; "it will come with his other accounts in the half year; for, no matter how liberal a man is to his boys, he'll be pestered with bills after all! There's blaguards will be lending them money, and teachin' them extravagance, just out of devilment, I believe. I know well how it used to be with myself when I was in old 'Trinity,' long ago. There was a little chap of the name of Foley, and, by the same token, a Pedlar, too——"

"Oh, Papa, he's going away, and you haven't thanked him yet!" cried Nelly, feelingly.

"What a hurry he's in," said Dalton, as he watched the eager haste with which the Pedlar was now arranging the straps of his knapsack.

"Would you not ask him to stay—to dine with us?" faltered Nelly, in a low faint whisper.

"The Pedlar?—to dine?" asked Dalton, with a look of astonishment.

"Frank's only friend!" sighed she, mournfully.

"By my conscience, sometimes I don't know if I'm standing on my head or my heels," cried Dalton, as he wiped his brows, with a look of utter bewilderment. "A Pedlar to dinner! There now—that's it—more haste worse speed: he's broke that strap in his hurry!"

"Shall I sew it for you?" said Nelly, stooping down and taking out her needle as she spoke.

"Oh, Fräulein, how good of you," cried Adolf; and his whole face beamed with an expression of delight. "How dearly shall I value this old pack hereafter."

These last words, scarcely muttered above his breath, were overheard by Nelly, and a deep blush covered her cheeks as she bent over the work.

"Where's your own maid? Couldn't one of the women do it as well?" cried Dalton, impatiently. "Ye'd not believe, Mr. Brawer, that we have the house full of servants this minute; a set of devils feasting and fattening at one's expense."

"Thanks, Fräulein," said the Pedlar, as she finished; "you little know how I shall treasure this hereafter."

"Ask him to stay, Papa," whispered Nelly once more.

"Sure he's a Pedlar!" muttered Dalton, indignantly.

"At least thank him. Tell him you are grateful to him."

"He'd rather I'd buy ten yards of damaged calico—that's the flattery *he'd* understand best," said Dalton, with a grin.

"Farewell, Herr von Dalton. Farewell, Fräulein!" said Adolf. And with a bow of deep respect he slowly retired from the room, while Nelly turned to the window to conceal her shame and sorrow together.

"It was this very morning," muttered Dalton, angrily, "when I spoke of giving a little dinner party, you did nothing but turn up your nose at this, that, and t'other. There was nobody good enough, forsooth! There was Monsieur Ratteau, the 'Croupier' of the tables there, a very nice man, with elegant manners, and the finest shirt-studs ever I seen, and you wouldn't hear of him."

Nelly heard little of this reproachful speech, for, sunk in the recess of the window, she was following with her eyes the retiring figure of Adolf Brawer. He had just crossed the "Platz," and ere he turned into a side street he stopped, wheeled round, and made a gesture of farewell towards the spot where, unseen by him, Nelly was still standing.

"He is gone!" muttered she, half aloud.

"Well, God speed him!" rejoined Dalton, testily. "I never could abide a Pedlar."

CHAPTER IV.

"MADAME DE HEIDENDORF."

KATE DALTON'S was a heavy heart as, seated beside her new friend, she whirled along the road to Vienna. The scenery possessed every attraction of historic interest and beauty. The season was the glorious one of an Italian spring. There were ancient cities, whose very names were like spells to memory. There were the spots of earth that Genius has consecrated to immortality. There were the scenes where Poetry caught its inspiration, and around which, even yet, the mind-created images of fancy seem to linger, all to interest, charm, and amuse her, and yet she passed them without pleasure, almost without notice.

The splendid equipage in which she travelled—the hundred appliances of ease and luxury around her—the obsequious, almost servile devotion of her attendants, recalled but one stern fact—that she had sold herself for all these things; that, for them, she had bartered her warm affections—her love of father, and sister, and brother—the ties of home and of kindred—even to the Faith at whose altar she had bent her knees in infancy. She had given all for greatness!

In all her castle-buildings of a future, her own family had formed figures in the picture. To render her poor father happy—to surround his old age with the comforts he pined after—to open to dear Nelly sources of enjoyment in the pursuit she loved—to afford Frank the means of associating with his comrades of rank—to mix in that society for which he longed—these, were her objects, and for them she was willing to pay dearly. But now she was not to witness the happiness of those she loved! Already the hard conditions of her contract were to be imposed. Banishment, first, then, Isolation; who could say what after!

Her travelling companion was scarcely well calculated to smooth down the difficulties of this conflict in her mind. Madame de Heidendorf was the very reverse of Lady Hester. Without the slightest pretension to good looks herself, she assumed to despise everything like beauty in others, constantly associating its possession with the vanity of weak intellects; she threw a kind of ridicule over these "Poor, pretty things," as she loved to call them, which actually seemed to make beauty and folly convertible terms. Political intrigue, or, to speak more fairly, mischief-making in state affairs, was her great and only passion. By dint of time, patience, considerable cunning, and a very keen insight into character, she had succeeded in obtaining the intimacy of many of the first states-

men of Europe. Many had trusted her with the conduct of little matters which the dignity of diplomacy could not stoop to. She had negotiated several little transactions, opened the way to reconciliations, smoothed the road to briberies, and allayed the petty qualms of struggling morality, where any other than a feminine influence would have been coarse and indelicate.

As a good Monarchist, she was always well received at the Austrian Court, and in St. Petersburg was accustomed to be treated with peculiar honour.

By what amount of compensation, or in what shape administered, Midchikoff had secured her present services, this true history is unable to record; but that Kate was eminently fortunate, drawing such a prize in the Lottery of Life, as to enter the world under *her* auspices, were facts that she dwelt upon without ceasing.

Frankness and candour are very charming things: they are the very soul of true friendship, and the spirit of all affectionate interest; but they can be made very disagreeable elements of mere acquaintanceship. Such was Madame de Heidendorf's. She freely told Kate, that of all the great Midchikoff's unaccountable freaks, his intended marriage with herself was the very strangest; and that, to unite his vast fortune and high position with mere beauty, was something almost incredible. There was a Landgravine of Hohenhöckingen—an Archduchess—a "*mais gauche*," of the Austrian house itself—there was a grand-daughter of the Empress Catharine—with any of whom she could easily have opened negotiations for him—all of them alliances rich in political influences. Indeed, there was another party—she was not at liberty to mention the name—and though to be sure she was "blind and almost idiotic," a union with her would eventually have made him a "Serene Highness." "So you see, my dear," said she, in winding up, "what you have cost him! Not," added she, after a few seconds' pause—"not, but I have known such marriages turn out remarkably well. There was that Prince Adalbert of Bohemia, who married the singing woman—what's her name?—that young creature that made such a sensation at the 'Scala'—'La Biondina' they called her. Well, it is true, he only lived with her during the Carnival, but there she is now, with her handsome house in the Bastey, and the prettiest equipage in the Prater. I know several similar cases. The Archduke Max and Prince Ravitzkay—though, perhaps, not him, for I believe he sent that poor thing away to the mines."

"His wife—to the mines!" gasped Kate, in terror.

"Don't be frightened, my dear child," said Madame, smiling; "be a good girl, and you shall have everything you like. Meanwhile, try and unlearn all those 'gaucheries' you picked up with that strange Lady Hester.

It was a shocking school of manners. All those eccentric out-of-the-way people, who lounged in and lounged out, talking of nothing but each other, utterly ignorant of the great interests that are at stake in Europe at this moment. Try, therefore, and forget that silly coterie altogether. When we arrive at Vienna, you will be presented to the Archduchess Louisa."

"And I shall see dear—dear Frank!" burst out Kate, with an irrepressible delight.

"And who is Frank, Madame?" said the other, proudly drawing herself up.

"My brother—my only brother—who is in the Austrian service."

"Is he on the Emperor's Staff?"

"I know nothing of his position, only that he is a Cadet."

"A Cadet, child! Why, do you know that that means a common soldier—a creature that mounts guard with a musket, or carries a bread-bag over its shoulder through the streets in a fatigue-jacket?"

"I care nothing for all that. He may be all you say, and twice as humble, but he is my brother Frank, still—the playfellow with whom I passed the day when—when I was happy—as I shall never be again!—the fond, kind brother, whom we were all so proud of."

An expression of scornful compassion on Madame de Heidendorf's features at once stopped Kate, and she covered her face with her hands to hide her shame.

"Madame la Princesse," began the Countess—for whenever she peculiarly desired to impress Kate with her duties, she always prefaced the lesson by her new title—"the past must be forgotten, or you will find yourself totally unable to compete with the difficulties of your station. There is but one way to make the Prince's *mésalliance* pardonable, which is by as seldom as possible parading its details. If, then, you insist upon seeing your brother during our stay at Vienna, it must be in secret. You said something, I think, of an old Field-Marshal—a connexion?"

"My father's uncle, Madame."

"Very true. Well, your brother can come with some letter or message from him: or if Nina, your maid, has no objection, he might pass for a lover of hers."

"Madame!" cried Kate, indignantly.

"I said, if Nina made no objection," said Madame de Heidendorf, as though answering the indignant exclamation. "But these are matters for *my* consideration, Madame—at least, if I understand the spirit of the Prince's instructions."

Some such scene as this, usually closing with a similar peroration,

formed the conversation of the road; and hour by hour Kate's courage fell lower, as she contemplated all that her elevation had cost her. And what a mockery was it after all! It was true that she journeyed in a carriage with all the emblazonry of royalty; that a group of uncovered lackeys attended her as she descended; that she was ever addressed by a proud title; a respectful, submissive devotion surrounding her at every instant. But, amid all this, there was not one look, one word of kindness; nothing of interest or sympathy with her solitary grandeur. It mattered little that the bars of her cell were of gold: it was a prison still.

With what eagerness did she turn from the present, with all its splendour, to think of her former life, when, wandering among the hills of Baden, she had listened to little Hans, or watched dear Nelly, as the first gleams of her intentions began to manifest themselves on a sculptured group. With what rapture had she heard passages that seemed akin to something she had felt but could not express! How had she loved the changeful effects of light and shade on a landscape, where every tree, or rock, or cliff, was familiar to her! Oh! if she could but be back again, hopeful, ardent, and trusting, as she once was! Oh! if the brief past could be but a dream, and she were once more beside her father and Nelly, knowing nothing of that world which, in so short a space, had revealed so much before her! Even to those who so lately had supplied the place of family to her, all were gone, and she was utterly alone!

She did not dare to think of George Onslow. It seemed to her like a treason to recall his memory; and if his image did rise at times before her fancy, a burning blush would cover her cheek, and a sense of shame would send a throb like agony through her heart. The plans and projects for her future life she heard of without interest; a vague and confused impression of a long journey—halting here and there, to be presented to certain great and distinguished persons—and finally of her arrival at St. Petersburg, were all that she knew. That the Prince was to join her there, and then, with the Emperor's permission, return with her to the south of Europe—such were the outlines of a career, over which a sinking heart threw a gloomy shadow.

Madame de Heidendorf was too occupied with her own thoughts to notice this despondency; besides that she was incessantly teaching Kate some one requisite or other of that rigid etiquette which prevailed in the society she was about to enter; the precise titles by which she was to address this or that personage; how many curtseys to give here, how many reverences there—little educational exercises that were always accompanied by some warning admonition of their importance to one who

like herself had never seen anything like good society, and whose breaches of good breeding would be certain of being severely commented on.

"Think of the Prince, Madame," she would say; "think of what he will suffer when they repeat any of your transgressions. I am afraid there are many humiliations in store for him! And what a step to take at such a moment, with these horrible Socialist doctrines abroad—these levelling theories of equality and so forth. I hope his Majesty the Emperor will pardon him—I hope he will forgive *you*."

This was a favourite speech of hers, and so often repeated, that Kate at last began to look on herself as a great criminal, and even speculated on what destiny should befall her if the Emperor proved unmerciful.

These were sorry resources to shorten the weariness of a journey, and Kate felt a throb of pleasure—the first she had experienced—when the towers of St. Stephen in the far distance announced the approach to Vienna.

CHAPTER V.

"AT VIENNA."

THE gossiping world of Vienna had a new subject for speculation and interest, as a guard of honour was seen standing at a large palace near the "Hoff," and the only information to explain the mystery was, that some great Diplomatist had arrived the evening before, and Heaven knew what wonderful events were in his charge and keeping. A gigantic "Chasseur" in green and gold, who lounged about the portal, followed by a great dog—a "fang-hund," whose silver collar was embossed with many a quartering—had engaged the attention of a very considerable crowd, which opened from time to time to permit the passage of some royal or princely equipage. As they thus fell back, a chance look would be directed upwards to the windows of the first floor, and there, passingly, they caught glimpses of one whose beauty soon formed the theme of every tongue. This was Kate Dalton, who, now rested from the fatigue of her journey, and dressed in the most becoming fashion, walked up and down a splendid saloon, watching to catch every sound, or gazing earnestly from the window to catch any sight, that might betoken her brother's coming. At Madame de Heidendorf's suggestion she had written a few lines that morning early to the Field-Marshal von Dalton, entreating, as a great favour, that he would procure leave for Frank to

come to her, and pass as much of his time as possible with her during her stay in Vienna. The note, brief as it was, cost her some trouble; she felt that much explanation might be necessary to state her present position—even who she was—and yet this was a subject she had no heart to enter into. Some expressions of affectionate interest towards himself would also have been fitting, but she could not find time for them. Frank, and Frank alone, was in her thoughts, and she left everything to the old General's ingenuity, as she concluded her note by subscribing herself, "Your affectionate niece, Kate Dalton, Affianced Princesse de Midchikoff."

It was the first time that she had written the words—the first time that she had ever impressed that massive seal of many quarterings, so royal-looking as it seemed! It was, also, the first time she had ever given an order to one of her servants; and the obsequious bows of the groom of the chamber, as he withdrew, were all separate and distinct sensations—low, but clear knockings of vanity at her heart, to which every object around contributed its aid. The apartment was splendid: not in that gorgeous taste of modern decoration of which she had seen so much already, but in a more stately fashion, recalling the grandeur of a past age, and exhibiting traces of a long line of princely occupants. The very portraits along the walls had a proud and haughty bearing, and the massive chairs glittered in all the blaze of heraldry. If she looked out, it was the towers of the 'Hoff Bourg'—the Home of the Hapsburgs—met her eye. If she listened, it was the clank of a soldier's salute broke the stillness; while the dull roll of wheels beneath the arched gateway told of the tide of visitors who came to pay their homage.

If Kate's heart had been less bound up with anxiety to see her brother, the scene beneath her window would have afforded her some interest, as equipage after equipage succeeded—now, the quiet splendour of a Court chariot; now, the more glaring magnificence of a Cardinal's carriage. Here came the lumbering old vehicle of an Archbishop, the reverential salute of the crowd indicating the rank of its occupant. Then the quick "present arms" of the sentry told of some General Officer; while, at intervals, the "turn out" of the whole guard denoted the arrival of a Royal Prince. Ambassadors and Ministers. Chamberlains and Chancellors, the dignitaries of the realm, the "Hautes Charges" of the Court—all came in crowds to present their respects to the Gräfin, for by this brief designation was she known from one end of Europe to the other. Madame de Heidendorf held a Levee, and none would absent themselves from so interesting an occasion.

It was the eve of a wonderful moment in Europe—it was the little

rific storm that even overturned thrones
se illustrious personages were met toge-
ents, to lisp soft phrases of flattery, and
e aspirant for a ribbon or a cross, a "Red
A few, more far-sighted than the rest, saw
man's hand in the distance—a few could
denoted the brooding hurricane; but even
ould last their time," and thus, with many a
ver the events of the hour, praised the wisdom
scorn those vulgar teachers whose democratic
ng to be whispered about. Some, were young,
dy to shed the last drop for the principles they
old grey-headed men, tried servants of Monarchy
t all were like-minded, and self-gratulation and
der of the day. Leaving them thus to such
the clank of jewelled swords, or the tap of a
ned the meet accompaniments of the themes,
er in whose fate we are more deeply interested.
he bell to ask if the messenger had not returned.
ere was "no answer to her note!" Her impa-
She ordered the servant who carried the note
questioned him closely as to whether he had
he had received. A soldier had said, "Gut!"
or Kate! It was her first lesson in "soldier
uly, she did not take it well. The "Princesse
have been treated with more deference. She
the thought struck her, and her mien and air
f; nor could she restrain the sense of admira-
ame, her own beauty evoked.
re, Madame," said a servant, "who has a letter
t into your own hands."
e," said she, impatiently; and as she spoke the
, and drawing himself up, carried his hand to
ing a letter, he said, "From the Field-Marshal

t the bearer, but hastily tore open the square-

' said she to the servant; and then turning to

ESSE AND BELOVED NIECE,—It was with—to
satisfaction that I read the not the less affec-

tionate that they were polite, lines you vouchsafed to inscribe to me, an old and useless, but not forgotten servant of an Imperial master. Immediately on perusing the aforesaid so-called note, I despatched my Adjutant to the head-quarters of the Franz Carl, to obtain—no service rules to the contrary forbidding, nor any defaults punition in any wise preventing—a day's furlough, for the Cadet von Dalton——"

"What regiment is yours?" said Kate, hastily, to the soldier.

"Franz Carl Infanterie! Highness," said the youth, respectfully, using the title he had heard assumed by the servant.

"Do you know many of your comrades—among the Cadets, I mean?"

"There are but seven in the battalion, Highness, and I know them all."

"Is Von Dalton an acquaintance of yours?"

"I am Von Dalton, Highness," said the youth, while a flush of surprise and pleasure lighted up his handsome features.

"Frank! Frank!" cried she, springing towards him with open arms; and ere he could recognise her, clasping him round the neck.

"Is this real? Is this a dream? Are you my own sister Kate?" cried the boy, almost choked with emotion. "And how are you here, and how thus?" and he touched the robe of costly velvet as he spoke.

"You shall know all, dear, dear Frank: you shall hear everything when the joy of this meeting will let me speak."

"They called you Highness: and how handsome you've grown."

"Have I, Frank," said she, pressing him down to a seat beside her, while, with hands interclasped, they sat gazing on each other.

"I am only beginning to remember you," said he, slowly. "You never used to wear your hair in long ringlets thus. Even your figure is changed; you are taller, Kate."

"It is the mere difference of dress, Frank," said she, blushing with conscious pride.

"No, no: you are quite changed. Even as I sit here beside you, I feel I know not what of shame at my daring to be so near——"

"So great a Lady, you would say, dear Frank," said she, laughing. "Poor boy, if you knew——" She stopped, and then, throwing her arms round his neck, went on rapidly—"But, my own dear brother, tell me of yourself: are you happy—do you like this service—are they kind to you—is Uncle Stephen as we hoped he should be?"

"My story is soon told, Kate," said he; "I am where I was, the day I [illegible] the army. I should have been made a Corporal——"

"Corporal!" cried Kate, laughing.

"Good thing it is, too," said the youth. "No guards to mount;

no fatigue duty; neither night patrol, nor watch, and four kreutzers extra pay."

"Poor dear boy!" cried she, kissing his forehead, while she gazed on him with a compassionate affection that spoke a whole world of emotion.

"But tell me of yourself, Kate. Why do they call you the Princess?"

"Because I am married, Frank—that is, I am betrothed—and will soon be married."

"And when did this occur? Tell me everything," cried he, impatiently.

"You shall know all, dearest Frank. You have heard how Lady Hester Onslow carried me away with her to Italy. Nelly has told you how we were living in Florence—in what splendour and festivity. Our palace frequented by all the great and distinguished of every country—French and German, and Spanish and Russian."

"I hate the Russians; but go on," said the boy, hastily.

"But why hate the Russians, Frank?" asked she, reddening, as she spoke.

"They are false-hearted and treacherous. See how they have driven the Circassians into a war, to massacre them; look how they are goading on the Poles to insurrection. Ay, they say that they have emissaries at this moment in Hungary on the same errand. I detest them."

"This may be their state policy, Frank, but individually——"

"They are no better; Walstein knows them well."

"And who is Walstein, Frank?"

"The finest fellow in the service; the one I would have wished you married to, Kate, above all the world. Think of a Colonel of Hussars at eight-and-twenty, so handsome, so brave, and such a rider. You shall see him, Kate!"

"But it's too late, Frank," said she, laughing; "you forget it's too late!"

"Ah! so it is," sighed the boy, seriously. "I often feared this," muttered he, after a pause. "Nelly's letters told me as much, and I said to myself, 'It will be too late.'"

"Then Nelly has told you all, perhaps?" said she.

"Not everything, nor, indeed, anything at all very distinctly. I could only make out what seemed to be her own impressions, for they appeared mere surmises."

"And of what sort were they?" asked Kate, curiously.

"Just what you would suspect from her. Everlasting fears about temptations, and trials, and so forth, continually praying that your heart might resist all the flatteries about you. The old story about humility. I thought

to myself, 'If the lesson be not more needful to Kate than to *me*, she runs no great risk after all!' for *I* was also warned about the seductions of the world! a poor Cadet, with a few kreutzers a day, told not to be a Sybarite! Returning wet through from a five hours' patrol, to burnish accoutrements in a cold, damp barrack, and then exhorted against the contamination of low society, when all around me were cursing the hardships they lived in, and execrating the slavery of the service!"

"Our dearest Nelly knows so little of the world," said Kate, as she threw a passing glance at herself in the mirror, and arranged the fall of a deep fringe of gold lace which was fastened in her hair.

"She knows nothing of it," said the boy, adjusting his sword knot. "She thought our Hussars wore white dolmans, and carried straight swords like the Cuirassiers."

"And the dear, simple creature asked me, in one of her letters, if I ever wore wild flowers in my hair now, as I used to do, long ago," said Kate, stealing another glance at the glass. "Flowers are pretty things in the head when rubies make the pinks, and the dewdrops are all diamonds."

Frank looked at her as she said this, and for the first time saw the proud elation her features assumed when excited by a theme of vanity.

"You are greatly changed, dearest Kate," said he, thoughtfully.

"Is it for the worse, Frank?" said she, half coquettishly.

"Oh! as to beauty, you are a thousand times handsomer," cried the boy, with enthusiasm. "I know not how, but every expression seems heightened, every feature more elevated; your air and gesture, your very voice, that once I thought was music itself, is far sweeter and softer."

"What a flatterer!" said she, patting his cheek.

"But then, Kate," said he, more gravely, "have these fascinations cost nothing? Is your heart as simple? Are your affections as pure? Ah! you sigh—and what a heavy sigh, too. Poor, poor Kate!"

And she laid her head upon his shoulder, while the heaving swell of her bosom told what sorrow the moment was costing her.

"Nelly, then, told you of my betrothal?" whispered she, in a weak, faint voice.

"No; I knew nothing of that. She told me all about the life you were leading; the great people with whom you were intimate; and, bit by bit, a hint, some little allusion would creep out as to the state of your heart. Perhaps she never meant it, or did not know it, but I remarked, in reading her letters over and over—they were the solace of many a weary hour—that, one name recurred so often in connexion with yours,

you must have frequently referred to him yourself, for in each extract from your letters I saw the name."

"This was strange. It must have been through inadvertence," said she, musingly. "I thought I had scarcely spoken of him."

"See how your hand told truth, even against your consciousness," said he, smiling.

Kate made no reply, but sat deep in thought.

"And is he here? When shall I see him?" asked Frank, impatiently.

"No, Frank. He is in Italy; he was detained there by business of importance. Besides, it is not etiquette that we should travel together. When the Emperor's permission has been obtained——"

"What Emperor?" asked Frank, in astonishment.

"Our Emperor—the Czar."

"What have you, an English girl born, to do with the Czar?"

"The Prince, my future husband, is his subject."

"Why, there is no end to this mystification," cried the boy, impatiently. "How can an English soldier be a Russian Prince?"

"I don't understand you, Frank. Prince Midchikoff is a Russian by birth."

"So that you are married to a Russian," said he, in a voice of deep emotion, "and all this time I have been fancying my brother-in-law an Englishman. I thought it was this same George—George Onslow."

A heavy dull sound startled him as he said this. It was Kate, who had fallen back, fainting, on the sofa. It was long before, with all Frank's efforts at restoration, that she came to herself; and, even when consciousness returned, tears flowed from her eyes and coursed down her cheeks copiously, as she lay speechless and motionless.

"My own poor Kate, my poor, dear sister," were all that Frank could say, as he held her cold, clammy hand within his own; and, with an almost breaking heart, gazed on her pale features. It was so like death! "And might not death be better?" thought he, as he travelled over in his mind the story, of whose secret he was now possessed. How differently did he judge all Nelly's counsels *now!* In what a changed spirit did he think of that wisdom which, but a few minutes back, he had sneered at! "And so it is," muttered he. "If we, who are born to humble fortunes, would cherish ambition, we must pay for them with our hearts' blood. Nelly was right; she often said so. Over and over again did she tell me 'Goodness is the only safe road to Greatness.' Oh, that she so beautiful as this should have missed the path!" And, sobbing violently, he kissed her hand, and watered it with his tears.

"Frank, you are with me—you'll not leave me," said she, faintly, as

she opened her eyes and stared in bewilderment around her. "I remember everything, now—everything," said she, with an emphasis on the last word. "This is Vienna: I recollect all. Ring that bell, Frank: let Nina come to me, but don't go away; be sure not to go."

Nina soon made her appearance, and with a look of half surprise, half admiration at the handsome soldier, assisted Kate to arise.

"I'll be back presently, Frank," said she, with a faint smile, and left the room. And the youth, overcome by emotion, sat down and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER VI.

PRIESTLY COUNSELS.

FRANK was so full of his own reflections, that he almost forgot his sister's absence; nor did he notice how the time went over, when he heard the sound of voices and the noise of a door closing; and, on looking up, perceived a handsome man, something short of middle aged, who, dressed in the deep black of a priest, wore a species of blue silk collar, the mark of a religious order. His features were perfectly regular, and their expression the most bland and courteous it was possible to imagine. There was a serene dignity, too, in his gait, as he came forward, that showed how thoroughly at home he felt on the soft carpet, and in the perfumed atmosphere of a drawing-room.

Bowing twice to Frank, he saluted him with a smile, so gentle and so winning, that the boy almost felt as if they had been already acquainted.

"I have come," said the Priest, "to pay my respects to the Princesse de Midchikoff, and, if my eyesight is not playing me false, I have the honour to recognise her brother."

Frank blushed with pleasure as he bowed an assent.

"May I anticipate the kindness—which your sister would not refuse me"—continued he, "and introduce myself. You may, perhaps, have heard of the Abbé d'Esmonde?"

"Repeatedly," cried Frank, taking the proffered hand in his own. "Nelly spoke of you in almost every letter. You were always so kind to Kate in Italy."

"How amply am I recompensed, were not the pleasure of knowing Miss Dalton a sufficient reward in itself. It is rare to find that combi-

nation of excellence which can command all the homage of fashion, and yet win the approbation of a poor priest."

There was a humility deep enough to be almost painful, in the tone in which these words were uttered; but Frank had little time to dwell on them, for already the Abbé had taken a seat on the sofa beside him, and was deep in the discussion of all Kate's attractions and merits.

There was a sincerity, an ardour of admiration, chastened only by the temper of his sacred character, that delighted the boy. If allusion were made to her beauty, it was only to heighten the praise he bestowed on her for other gifts, and display the regulated action of a mind proof against every access of vanity. Her correct judgment, her intuitive refinement, the extreme delicacy of her sensibilities—these were the themes he dwelled upon, and Frank felt that they must be rare gifts indeed, when the very description of them could be so pleasurable.

From what the Abbé said, so far from her marriage with the great Russian being a piece of fortune, she had but to choose her position amid the first houses of Europe. "It was true," he added, "that the 'Midchikoff's' wealth was like royalty, and as he united to immense fortune great claims of personal merit, the alliance had everything to recommend it."

"And this is so?" cried Frank, eagerly. "The Prince is a fine fellow?"

"Generous and munificent to an extent almost fabulous," said D'Esmonde, who seemed rather to resume his own train of thought. than reply to Frank's question. "The splendour of his life has already canonized a proverb."

"But his temper—his manner—his disposition?"

"Like all his countrymen, he is reserved, almost cold to strangers; his intimates, however, talk of him as frankness and candour itself. Even on political themes, where Russians are usually most guarded, he gives his opinions freely and, manfully, and strange enough too, with a liberality which, though common enough in our country, must be very rare indeed in his."

"That is strange!" said Frank, thoughtfully.

"Yes," said D'Esmonde, dropping into the tone of one who insensibly poured out his inmost thoughts in soliloquising—"yes! he feels what we all do! that this state of things cannot last—disparity of condition may become too palpable and too striking. The contrast between affluence and misery may display itself too offensively! Men may one day or other refuse to sign a renewal of the bond of servitude, and then —and then——"

[illegible] but the troops [illegible]

[illegible] said the Abbé, affection- [illegible] will begin to learn that they [illegible] the metal can be [illegible]

[illegible] they've sworn to their [illegible]

[illegible] the one-half of a [illegible] when the other half be [illegible] great object [illegible] cease to [illegible] the responsi- [illegible] in the scale [illegible] this privilege, to-day. [illegible] the very verge of the [illegible] what would you [illegible] even though the [illegible] the obedience?"

[illegible]

[illegible] I read your [illegible] of your eye. [illegible] and that when [illegible] with all its perils [illegible] Besides, remember, [illegible] the service, although it [illegible] appeal to your sense of [illegible] Gendarmerie.

[illegible] of your country—carry the flag [illegible] France—plant the double eagle [illegible] aggressive war has its glorious [illegible] and heroism——But, here is the [illegible] courteously towards her.

[illegible] Kate, with an expression of delight. [illegible] Priest pressed to his lips with all [illegible] How pleasant to see the face of a friend [illegible] Abbé, this is my brother Frank, of [illegible]

[illegible] said D'Esmonde, passing his arm [illegible] albeit our coats are not of the same colour. [illegible]

A few moments saw him seated between the brother and sister on the sofa, recounting the circumstances of his journey, and detailing, for Kate's amusement, the latest news of Florence.

"Lady Hester is much better in health, and spirits, too," said the Abbé; "the disastrous circumstances of fortune would seem to have taken a better turn; at least, it is probable that Sir Stafford's losses will be comparatively slight. I believe her satisfaction on this head arises entirely from feeling that no imputation of altered position can now be alleged as the reason for her change of religion."

"And has she done this?" asked Kate, with a degree of anxiety; for she well knew on what feeble grounds Lady Hester's convictions were usually built.

"Not publicly; she waits for her arrival at Rome, to make her confession at the shrine of St. John of Lateran. Her doubts, however, have all been solved—her reconciliation is perfect."

"Is she happy? Has she found peace of mind at last?" asked Kate, timidly.

"On this point I can speak with confidence," said D'Esmonde, warmly; and at once entered into a description of the pleasurable impulse a new train of thoughts and impressions, had given to the exhausted energies of a "fine lady's" life. It was so far true, indeed, that for some days back she had never known a moment of *ennui*. Surrounded by sacred emblems and a hundred devices of religious association, she appeared to herself as if acting a little poem of life, wherein a mass of amiable qualities, of which she knew nothing before, were all developing themselves before her! and what between meritorious charities, saintly intercessions, visits to shrines, and decorations of altars, she had not an instant unoccupied; it was one unceasing round of employment; and with prayers, bouquets, lamps, confessions, candles, and penances, the day was even too short for its duties.

The little Villa of La Rocca was now a holy edifice. The drawing-room had become an oratory; a hollow-cheeked "Seminariste," from Como, had taken the place of the Maestro di Casa. The pages wore a robe like Acolytes; and even Alfred Jekyl began to fear that a costume was in preparation for himself, from certain measurements that he had observed taken with regard to his figure.

"My time is up," said Frank, hastily, as he arose to go away.

"You are not about to leave me, Frank?" said Kate.

"Yes, I must; my leave was only till four o'clock, as the Field-Marshal's note might have shown you; but I believe you threw it into the fire before you finished it."

"Did I, really? I remember nothing of that. But, stay, and I will write to him. I'll say that I have detained you."

"But the service, Kate, dearest! My Sergeant—my over-Lieutenant—my Captain—what will they say? I may have to pass three days in irons for the disobedience."

"Modern chivalry has a dash of the treadmill through it," said D'Esmonde, sarcastically; and the boy's cheek flushed as he heard it. The Priest, however, had already turned away, and, walking into the recess of a window, left the brother and sister free to talk unmolested.

"I scarcely like him, Kate," whispered Frank.

"You scarcely know him yet," said she, with a smile. "But when can you come again to me—to-morrow, early?"

"I fear not. We have a parade and a field-inspection, and then 'rapport' at noon."

"Leave it to me, then, dear Frank," said she, kissing him; "I must try if I cannot succeed with 'the Field,' better than you have done.

"There's the recal-bugle," cried the boy, in terror; and, snatching up his cap, he bounded from the room at once.

"A severe service—at least one of rigid discipline," said D'Esmonde, with a compassionating expression of voice; "it is hard to say, whether it works for good or evil, repressing the development of every generous impulse, as certainly as it restrains the impetuous passions of youth."

"True," said Kate, pointedly; "there would seem something of priest-craft in their regime. The individual is nothing, the service everything."

"Your simile lacks the great element—force of resemblance, Madame," said D'Esmonde, with a half smile. "The Soldier has not, like the Priest, a grand sustaining hope—a glorious object before him. He knows little or nothing of the cause in which his sword is drawn—his sympathies may even be against his duty. The very boy who has just left us—noble hearted fellow that he is—what strange wild notions of liberty has he imbibed! how opposite are all his speculations to the stern calls of the duty he has sworn to discharge!"

"And does he dare——"

"Nay, Madame, there was no indiscretion on his part; my humble walk in life has taught me, that if I am excluded from all participation in the emotions which sway my fellow-men, I may at least study them as they arise, watch them in their infancy, and trace them to their fruit of good or evil. Do not fancy, dear lady, that it is behind the grating of the Confessional only, that we read men's secrets. As the physician gains his knowledge of anatomy from the lifeless body, so do we learn the

complex structure of the human heart in the death-like stillness of the cell, with the penitent before us! But yet all the knowledge thus gained is but a step to something further. It is while reading the tangled story of the heart—its struggles—its efforts—the striving after good, here—the inevitable fall back to evil, there—the poor weak attempt at virtue—the vigorous energy of vice—it is hearing this sad tale from day to day—learning how, in what are called the purest natures, how deep, the well of corruption lies, and that not one generous thought, one noble aspiration, or one holy desire rises unalloyed by some base admixture of worldly motive. It is thus armed we go forth into the world, to fight against the wiles and seductions of life! How can *we* be deceived by the blandishments that seduce others? What avail to us those pretentious displays of self-devotion—those sacrifices of wealth—those proud acts of munificence which astonish the world, but of whose secret springs we are conversant? What wonder, then, if I have read the artless nature of a boy like that, or see in him the springs of an ambition he knows not of, himself? Nay, it would be no rash boast to say that I have deciphered more complicated inscriptions than those upon his heart. I have traced some upon his sister's!" The last three words he uttered with a slow and deep enunciation, leaving a pause between each, and bending on her a look of intense meaning.

Kate's cheek became scarlet, then pale, and a second time she flushed, till neck and shoulders grew crimson together.

"You have no confidences to make me, my dear, dear child," said D'Esmonde, as, taking her hand, he pressed her down on a sofa beside him. "Your faltering lips have nothing to articulate—no self-repinings, no sorrows to utter; for I know them all!" He paused for a few seconds, and then resumed: "Nor have you to fear me as a stern or a merciless judge. Where there is a sacrifice, there is a blessing!"

Kate held down her head, but her bosom heaved, and her frame trembled with emotion.

"Your motives," resumed he, "would dignify even a rasher course. I know the price at which you have bartered happiness—not your own only, but another's with it!"

She sobbed violently, and pressed her hands over her face.

"Poor, poor fellow!" cried he, as if borne away by an impulse of candour that would brook no concealment, "how I grieved to see him, separated, as we were, by the wide and yawning gulf between us, giving himself up to the very recklessness of despair, now cursing the heartless dissipation in which his life was lost, now accusing himself of golden opportunities neglected, bright moments squandered, petty misunderstandings exaggerated into dislikes, the passing coldness of the moment

exalted into a studied disdain! We were almost strangers to each other before—nay, I half fancied that he kept aloof from me. Probably"—here D'Esmonde smiled with a bland dignity—"probably he called me a 'Jesuit'—that name so full of terror to good Protestant ears; but, on his sick bed, as he lay suffering and in solitude, his faculties threw off the deceptive influences of prejudice; he read me then more justly; he saw that I was his friend. Hours upon hours have we passed talking of you; the theme seemed to give a spring to an existence from which, till then, all zest of life had been withdrawn. I never before saw as much of passion, with a temper so just and so forgiving. He needed no aid of mine to read your motives truly. 'It is not for herself that she has done this,' were words that he never ceased to utter. He knew well the claims that family would make on you, the heart-rending appeals from those you could not but listen to! 'Oh! if I but could think that she will not forget me; that some memory of me will still linger in her mind!' this was his burning prayer, syllabled by lips parched by the heat of fever; and when I told him to write to you——"

"To write to me!" cried she, catching his arm, while her cheeks trembled with intense agony, "you did not give such counsel?"

"Not alone that," said D'Esmonde, calmly, "but promised that I would myself deliver the letter into your hands. Is martyrdom less glorious that a cry of agony escapes the victim, or that his limbs writhe as the flame wraps round them? Is self-sacrifice to be denied the sorrowful satisfaction to tell its woes? I bade him write, because it would be good for him and for you, alike."

She stared eagerly, as if to ask his meaning.

"Good for both," repeated he, slowly. "Love will be, to him, a guide-star through life, leading him by paths of high and honourable ambition; to you, it will be the consolation of hours that even splendour will not enliven. Believe me," here he raised his voice to a tone of command and authority—"believe me that negation is the lot of all. Happiest they who only suffer in their affections! And what is the purest of all love? Is it not that, the devotee feels for his protecting saint that sense of ever present care—that consciousness of a watching, unceasing affection, that neither slumbers nor wearies—following us in our joy, beside us in our afflictions—some humble effigy, some frail representation is enough to embody this conception, but its essence lies in the heart of hearts! Such a love as this—pure, truthful, and enduring—may elevate the humblest life into heroism, and throw a sungleam over the dreariest path of destiny. The holy bond that unites the grovelling nature below, with glory above, has its humble type on earth in those who, separated by fate, are together in affection! I bade him write to you a few lines;

he was too weak for more; indeed, his emotion almost made the last impossible. I pressed him, however, to do it, and pledged myself to place them in your hands; my journey hither had no other object." As he spoke, he took forth a small sealed packet and gave it to Kate, whose hands trembled as she took it.

"I shall spend some days in Vienna," said he, rising, to take leave; "pray let me have a part of each of them with you. I have much to say to you, and of other matters than those we have now spoken." And kissing her hand with a respectful devotion, the Abbé withdrew, without ever once raising his eyes towards her.

Sick with sorrow and humiliation—for such she acutely felt—Kate Dalton rose and retired to her room. "Tell Madame de Heidendorf, Nina," said she, "that I feel tired to-day, and beg she will excuse my not appearing at dinner."

Nina curtsied her obedience, but it was easy to see that the explanation by no means satisfied her, and that she was determined to know something more of the origin of her young mistress's indisposition.

"Madame knows that the Archduke is to dine here."

"I know it," said Kate, peevishly, and as if desirous of being left in quiet.

Nina again curtsied, but in the brilliant flashing of her dark eyes it was plain to mark the consciousness that some secret was withheld from her. The "Soubrette" class are instinctive readers of motives—"their only books are '*ladies*'' looks"—but they con them to perfection. It was then with a studied pertinacity that Nina proceeded to arrange drawers and fold dresses, and fifty other similar duties, the discharge of which she saw was torturing her mistress.

"I should wish to be alone, Nina, and undisturbed," said Kate, at last, her patience being entirely exhausted.

Nina made her very deepest reverence, and withdrew.

Kate waited for a few seconds, till all sound of her retiring steps had died away, then arose, and locked the door.

She was alone; the packet which the Abbé had delivered lay on the table before her; she bent down over it, and wept. The utter misery of sorrow is only felt where self-reproach mingles with our regrets. All the pangs of other misfortunes are light in comparison with this. The irrevocable past was her own work; she knew it, and cried, till her very heart seemed bursting.

CHAPTER VII.

SECRETS OF HEAD AND HEART.

I MUST ask of my reader to leave this chamber, where, overwhelmed by her sorrows, poor Kate poured out her grief in tears, and follow me to a small but brilliantly-lighted apartment, in which a little party of four persons was seated, discussing their wine, and enjoying the luxury of their cigars. Be not surprised when we say that one of the number was a lady. Madame de Heidendorf, however, puffed her weed with all the zest of a smoker; the others were the Archduke Ernest, a plain, easy-tempered looking man, in the grey undress of an Austrian General; the Foreign Minister, Count Nörinberg; and our old acquaintance, the Abbé d'Esmonde.

The table, beside the usual ornaments of a handsome dessert, was covered with letters, journals, and pamphlets, with here and there a coloured print in caricature of some well-known political personage. Nothing could be more easy and unconstrained than the air and bearing of the guests. The Archduke sat with his uniform coat unbuttoned, and resting one leg upon a chair before him; the Minister tossed over the books, and brushed off the ashes of his cigar against the richly-damasked table cloth; while even the Abbé seemed to have relaxed the smooth urbanity of his face into a look of easy enjoyment. Up to this moment the conversation had been general, the principal topics being the incidents of the world of fashion, the flaws and frivolities, the mishaps and misadventures of those whose names were familiar to his Imperial Highness, and in whose vicissitudes he took the most lively interest. These, and a stray anecdote of the turf in England, were the only subjects he cared for, hating politics and state affairs with a most cordial detestation. His presence, however, was a compliment that the Court always paid "the Countess," and he submitted to his turn of duty manfully.

Deeply involved in the clouds of his cigar-smoke, and even more enveloped in the misty regions of his own reveries, he sipped his wine in silence, and heard nothing of the conversation about him. The Minister was then perfectly free to discuss the themes most interesting to him, and learn whatever he could of the state of public opinion in Italy.

"You are quite right, Abbé," said he, with a sage shake of the head. "Small concessions, petty glimpses of liberty, only give a zest for more

enlarged privileges. There is nothing like a good flood of popular anarchy for creating a wholesome disgust to Freedom. There must be excesses!"

"Precisely so, Sir," said the Abbé. "There can be no question of an antidote if there has been no poisoning."

"Aye; but may not this system be pushed too far? Is not his Holiness already doing so?"

"Some are disposed to think so; but I am not of the number," said D'Esmonde. "It is necessary that he should himself be convinced that the system is a bad one; and there is no mode of conviction so palpable as by a personal experience. Now, this, he will soon have. As yet, he does not see that every step in political freedom is an advance towards the fatal heresy that never ceases its persecutions of the Church. Not that our Revolutionists care for Protestantism or the Bible either; but, by making common cause with those who do, see what a large party in England becomes interested for their success. The right of judgment conceded in religious matters, how can you withhold it in political ones? The men who brave the Church will not tremble before a Cabinet. Now the Pope sees nothing of this; he even mistakes the flatteries offered to himself for testimonies of attachment to the Faith, and all those kneeling hypocrites who implore his blessing he fancies are faithful children of Rome. He must be awakened from this delusion; but yet none save himself can dispel it. He is obstinate and honest."

"If the penalty were to be his own alone, it were not so much matter," said the Minister; "but it will cost a revolution."

"Of course it will; but there is time enough to prepare for it."

"The state of the 'Milanais' is far from satisfactory," said the Minister, gravely.

"I know that; but a revolt of a prison always excuses double irons," said D'Esmonde, sarcastically.

"Tell him of Sardinia, Abbé," said Madame de Heidendorf.

"Your real danger is from that quarter," said D'Esmonde. "There is a growing spirit of independence there—a serious desire for free institutions, wide apart from the wild democracy of the rest of Italy. This is a spirit you cannot crush; but you can do better—you can corrupt it. Genoa is a hotbed of Socialist doctrine; the wildest fanaticism of the 'Reds' is there triumphant, and our Priests are manfully aiding the spread of such opinions. They have received orders to further these notions; and it is thus, and by the excesses consequent on this, you will succeed in trampling down that moderated liberty which is the curse that England is destined to disseminate amongst us. It is easy enough

to make an excited people commit an act of indiscretion, and then, with public opinion on your side——"

"How I detest that phrase," said Madame de Heidendorf; "it is the lowest cant of the day."

"The thing it represents is not to be despised, Madame," said the Abbé.

"These are English notions," said she, sneeringly.

"They will be Russian ones, yet, depend upon it, Madame."

"I'd rather know what a few men of vast fortune, like Midchikoff, for instance, think, than have the suffrages of half the greasy mobs of Europe."

"By the way," said the Minister, "what is he doing? Is it true that he is coquetting with Liberals and Fourierists, and all that?"

"For the moment he is," said Madame de Heidendorf; "and two or three of the popularity-seeking Sovereigns have sent him their decorations, and if he does not behave better he will be ordered home."

"He is of great use in Italy," said the Minister.

"True; but he must not abuse his position."

"He is just vain enough to lend himself to a movement," said D'Esmonde; "but he shall be watched."

These last words were very significantly uttered.

"You know the Princess, Abbé?" asked the Minister, with a smile; and another smile, as full of meaning, replied to the question.

"She's pretty, a'n't she?" asked the Archduke.

"Beautiful is the word, Sir; but if your Imperial Highness would like to pass judgment personally, I'll beg of her to come down to the drawing-room."

"Of all things, most kind of you to make the offer," said he, rising and arranging his coat and sword-knot into some semblance of propriety, while Madame de Heidendorf rang the bell, and despatched a messenger to Kate with the request.

Nina was overjoyed at the commission entrusted to her. Since Kate's peremptory order, she had not ventured to intrude herself upon her; but now, armed with a message, she never hesitated about invading the precincts of that silent chamber, at whose door she often stood in doubt and speculation.

She tapped gently at the door: there was no answer. A second summons was alike unreplied to, and Nina bent down her head to listen. There were long-drawn breathings, like sleep, but a heavy sigh told that the moments were those of waking sorrow. Cautiously turning the handle of the door, without noise, she opened it and passed in. The room was shrouded in a dim half-light, and it was not till after the lapse of

te seconds that Nina could distinguish the form of her young mistress, with her head buried in her hands she sat before a table on which lay open letter.

So absorbed was Kate in grief that she heard nothing, and Nina ap-ached her, slowly, till at last she stood directly behind her, fixedly arding the heaving figure, the dishevelled hair, and the trembling ds, that seemed to clutch with eagerness some object within their sp. Kate suddenly started, and pushing back her hair from her eyes, ned as if trying to collect her wandering thoughts. Then, unclasp-a case, she placed a miniature before her, and contemplated it atten-ly. Nina bent over her till she almost touched her in her eagerness. I any one been there to have seen her features at the moment, they ld have perceived the traits of intense and varied passion, surprise, rage, and jealousy, all struggling for the mastery. Her dark skin v almost livid, and her black eyes glowed with anger, while with a e like convulsion she pressed her hands to her heart, as if to calm its ings. A sea of stormy passions was warring within her, and in her ageful expression might be seen the conflict of her resolves. At last, appeared to have decided, for, with noiseless steps, she gradually ated toward the door, her eyes all the while steadily fixed on her ress.

; seemed to require no slight effort to repress the torrent of rage in her, for even at the door she stood irresolute for a moment, and , softly opening it, withdrew. Once outside, her pent-up passions d vent, and she sobbed violently. Her mood was, however, more of r than of sorrow, and there was an air of almost insolent pride in the she now knocked, and then, without waiting for reply, entered the .

Madame de Heidendorf requests that the Princess will appear in the ing-room," said she, abruptly, and confronting Kate's look of con-sion with a steadfast stare.

Say that I am indisposed, Nina—that I feel tired and unwell," said , timidly.

There is an Archduke, Madam."

What care I for an Archduke, Nina," said Kate, trying to smile r the awkwardness of her own disturbed manner.

I have always believed that great folk liked each other," said Nina, stically.

Then I must lack one element of that condition, Nina," said Kate, humouredly, "but pray make my excuses—say anything you like, t. I may be left in quiet."

"How delightful Madame's reveries must be when she attaches such value to them!"

"Can you doubt it, Nina?" replied Kate, with a forced gaiety. "A betrothed bride ought to be happy, you are always telling me so. I hear of nothing from morn till night but of rich caskets of gems and jewels; you seem to think that diamonds would throw a lustre over any gloom."

"And would they not?" cried Nina, passionately. "Has not the brow nobler and higher thoughts when encircled by a coronet like this? Does not the heart beat with greater transport beneath gems like these?" And she opened case after case of sparkling jewels as she spoke, and spread them before Kate, on the table.

"And yet I have learned to look on them calmly?" said Kate, with an expression of proud indifference.

"Does not that dazzle you?" said Nina, holding up a cross of rose diamonds.

"No!" said Kate, shaking her head.

"Nor that?" cried Nina, displaying a gorgeous necklace.

"Nor even that, Nina."

"Is Madame's heart so steeled against womanly vanities," said Nina, quickly, while she threw masses of costly articles before her, "that not one throb, not one flush of pleasure, is called up at sight of these?"

"You see, Nina, that I can look on them calmly."

"Then this, perchance, may move you," cried Nina; and with a bound she sprung to the table at which Kate was seated, and, dashing the handkerchief away, seized the miniature, and held it up.

Kate uttered a shrill cry and fell back fainting. Nina gazed at her for a second or so with a look of haughty disdain, and sprinkling the pale features with a few drops of water she turned away. With calm composure she replaced each precious gem within its case, laid the miniature once more beneath the handkerchief, and then left the room.

"Your Princess will not honour us it seems with her company," said the Archduke, half in pique, as the messenger returned with Kate's excuses; "and yet I looked for her coming to get rid of all the farrago of politics that you, wise folk, will insist upon talking."

The Countess and the Minister exchanged most significant glances at this speech, while D'Esmonde politely assented to the remark, by adding something about the relaxation necessary to overwrought minds, and the need that Princes should enjoy some repose as well as those of lower

agree. "I can, however, assure your Imperial Highness," said he, that this is no caprice of the young Princess. She is really far from well, and was even unable to receive her own relative this afternoon, the Count von Dalton."

"What, is old Auersberg a relative of hers?"

"An Uncle, or a Grand-Uncle, I forget which, Sir."

"Then that wild youth in the Franz Carl must be a connexion too?"

"The Cadet is her brother, Sir."

"Indeed! What an extravagant fellow it is. They say that, counting on being Auersberg's heir, he spends money in every possible fashion; and as the tradespeople take the succession on trust, his debts are already considerable. It was only yesterday his Colonel spoke to me of sending him to the Banat, or some such place. His family must be rich, I suppose?"

"I believe quite the reverse, Sir. Poor to indigence. Their entire hope is on the Count von Auersberg."

"He held a frontier command for many years, and must have saved money. But will he like to see it in hands like these?"

"I believe—at least so the story goes"—said D'Esmonde, dropping his voice to a whisper, "that the boy's arguments have scarcely assisted his object in that respect. They say that he told the Count that in times like these no man's fortune was worth a year's purchase; that when Monarchs were tottering, and thrones rocking, it were better to spend one's means freely than to tempt pillage by hoarding it."

"Are these his notions?" cried the Archduke, in amazement.

"Yes; the wildest doctrines of Socialism are his creed—opinions, I grieve to say, more widely spread than any one supposes."

"How is this, then? I see the private regimental reports of every corps—I read the conduct-rolls of almost every company, and yet no hint of this disaffection has reached me."

"A Priest could reveal more than an Adjutant, Sir," said the Abbé, smiling. "These youths who fancy themselves neglected—who think their claims disregarded—who, in a word, imagine that some small pretension, on the score of family, should be the spring of their promotion, are easily seduced into extravagant ideas about freedom and so forth."

"Austria is scarce the land for such fruit to ripen in," said the Archduke, laughing. "Let him try France, or the United States."

"Very true, your Highness," chimed in the Abbé; "but such boys ought to be watched—their conduct inquired strictly into."

"Or better still, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the Archduke, sternly, "dismissed the service. I see no profit in retaining amongst us the seeds of this French malady."

"I believe your Highness takes the true view of the difficulty," said D'Esmonde, as though reflecting over it. "And yet you will be asked to make an officer of him in a day or two."

"An officer of this boy, and why? or by whom?"

"The Princess, his sister, will make the request; probably through Von Auersberg."

"But when I tell the 'Feld'——"

"Ah, your Imperial Highness could not betray a confidence!" said D'Esmonde. "I have ventured to disclose to you what has come to my knowledge by means only accessible to myself; I therefore rely on your Highness not to divulge, however you may use it."

"He shall not continue to wear our cloth, that you may certainly rely on, M. l'Abbe," said the Archduke, sternly.

"In any case, wait for his sister's departure, Sir," said D'Esmonde, anxiously; "a few days or hours. As soon as this silly old lady has made up that budget of gossip and scandal she fancies to be political news, we'll see her leave this, and then, he can be dealt with as you think proper."

The Archduke made no reply—not seeming either to assent to or reject the counsel. "It would break the old Marshal's heart," said he, at last. "That gallant old soldier would never survive it."

"A treason might, indeed, kill him," said D'Esmonde. "But your Highness will anticipate exposure by dismissal—dismissal, peremptory and unexplained."

Again the Archduke was silent, but his lowering brow and dark expression told that the subject was giving him deep and serious thought. "I paid no attention to your conversation this evening, Abbé," said he, at last; "but it struck me, from a chance word, here and there, that you suspect these same 'Liberal' notions are gaining ground."

"Heresies against the Faith, Sir, have begotten their natural offspring, heresies against the State: and Governments do not yet awaken to the fact, that they who scorn the Altar, will not respect the Throne. The whole force of what are called Liberal Institutions has been to weaken the influence of the Clergy; and yet, it is precisely on that same influence you will have to fall back. It is beneath the solemn shadow of the Church you'll seek your refuge yet!"

"No, no, Father," said the Archduke, with a laugh; "we have another remedy."

"The mitre is stronger than the 'mitraille,' after all," said D'Esmonde, boldly. "Believe me, Sir, that the solemn knell that tolls an excommunication will strike more terror through Christendom than all your artillery."

Either the remark or the tone in which it was uttered was unpleasing the Prince; indeed, all the Abbé's courtesy at times gave way to an most impetuous boldness, which Royalty never brooks, for he turned ay haughtily, and joined the others at a distant part of the room.

There was something of scorn in the proud look which D'Esmonde e after him, and then slipped from the chamber with noiseless step l disappeared. Inquiring the way to the Princess's apartment, the bé slowly ascended the stairs, pondering deeply as he went. Nina passing the corridor at the moment, and, supposing that he had taken the direction, politely asked if she could offer him any guid-e? Scarcely noticing the questioner, he replied,

"I was looking for the Princess de Midchikoff's apartments."

"It is here, Sir; but she is indisposed."

"If you would say that the Abbé d'Esmonde——"

He had got thus far when, lifting his eyes, his glance fell upon her tures; and then, as if spell-bound, he stood silently gazing at her. a's cheek grew crimson under the stare; but her eyes met his with haken firmness.

"If I were to disbelieve all probabilities," said he, slowly, "I should that I see an old friend before me. Are you not the daughter of ertos, the Toridor of Seville?"

"Fra Eustace!" said Nina, stepping back and staring steadily at him.

"No longer so, Lola; I am the Abbé d'Esmonde now," said he, ile a faint flush tinged his pale features.

"And I am Nina, the 'Cameriera,'" replied she, scornfully. "See unequally Fortune has dealt with us!"

D'Esmonde made a sign towards the door, which she at once under-d, and answered,

"Yes, in the service of the Princess."

"This is, indeed, a strange meeting, Lola."

"Call me Nina," said the girl, flushing, "or I shall remember old s, and my Spanish blood will little bear such memories."

"Where can we talk together, Nina?"

"Come this way, Holy Father," said she, with a half-sneering smile. uppose a poor girl may receive her Confessor in her chamber."

D'Esmonde walked after her without speaking. While crossing a bby she unlocked a door, and admitted him into a small but neatly-ished room.

"Dear Lola," said the Priest, as, taking her hand, he looked affec-ately at her—"I must needs call you by the old name—what turn of has brought you here?"

"It is a question well becomes you," said the girl, releasing her hand from his grasp, and drawing herself proudly up. "You cut the bark adrift, and you wonder that it has become a wreck!"

"How this old warmth of temper recalls the past, and how I love you for it, as I grieve over it, Lola: but be calm, and tell me everything, just as you used to tell me years ago."

"Oh! if I had the same pure heart as then," cried the girl, passionately. "Oh! if I could but shed tears, as once I did, over each slight transgression, and not have my spirit seared and hardened, as the world has made it."

"We cannot carry the genial freshness of youth into the ripe years of judgment, Lola. Gifts decay, and others succeed them."

"No more of this casuistry. *You* are, I see, the same, whatever changes time may have made in *me*; but I have outlived these trickeries. Tell me, frankly, what do you want with me?"

"Must there needs be some motive of self-interest in renewing an old but interrupted friendship, Lola? You remember what we once were to each other?"

"Oh, that I could forget it!—oh, that I could wash out the thought, or even think it but a dream! But how can you recall these memories? If the sorrow be mine, is not the shame all yours?"

"The shame and the sorrow are alike mine," said D'Esmonde, in a voice of deep dejection. "*You* alone, of all the world, were ever able to shake within me the great resolves that in prayer and devotion I had formed. For *you*, Lola, I was, for a space, willing to resign the greatest cause that ever man engaged in. Ay, for love of *you*, I was ready to peril everything—even to my soul! Is not this enough for shame and sorrow, too? Is not this humiliation for one who wears the robe that I do?"

"You were a student in those days," said Nina, with a sneering smile; "and I never heard you speak of all those dreadful sacrifices. You used to talk of leaving the college with a light heart. You spoke of the world as if you were impatient to mingle with it. You planned, I know not how many, roads to fortune and advancement. Among other careers, I remember," and here she burst into a scornful laugh, that made the Priest's cheek grow crimson with passion—"I remember how you hit upon one, which speaks rather for your ardour than your prudence. Do you forget that you would be a Toridor? You, whose cheek grew pale, and whose heart sickened, as my father's horse lay embowelled in the ring, and who fainted outright when the bull's horns were driven into the barricade near you. You a Toridor!

[illegible] have courage!" And, as she spoke, her eyes flashed [illegible] passion.

[illegible] said the Priest, in a voice almost guttural from emotion, — [illegible] is there no other courage than the vulgar defiance of personal [illegible] the quality of the veriest savage and the merest brute in creation. [illegible] nothing more exalted in courage than to face bodily peril? [illegible] its instincts, selfishness! What think you of the courage of [illegible] who, in all the conscious strength of intellect, with powers to win [illegible] upward way amongst the greatest and the highest, can stoop to a life of poverty and neglect—can give up all that men strive for—home, affection, family, citizenship—content to toil apart and alone—to watch, and fast, and pray, and think—ay, think till the very brain reels with labour; and all this for a cause in which he is but a unit! Courage! Tell me not of courage beside that of him who dares to shake the strongest thrones, and convulses empires with his word, whose counsels brave the might of armies, and dare even kings to controvert; and, greatest of all, the courage that for a cause can risk salvation! Yes, Lola, he who to save others hazards his own eternity! Have I not done it?" cried he, carried away by an impetuous rush of feeling. "Have I not overborne the truth and sustained the falsehood? Have I not warped the judgments, and clouded the faculties, and misdirected the aspirations of many who came to me for counsel, knowing that if there might be evil now there would be good hereafter, and that for present and passing sorrow there would be a glorious day of rejoicing. To this end have I spoken Peace to the Guilty man, and Hope to the Hardened! Not for him, nor for me, but for the countless millions of the Church—for the mighty hosts who look to her for succour and consolation! This I call courage!"

And he drew himself proudly up, and folded his arms on his breast with an air of haughty composure, while the girl, awed by his manner, and subdued by the impetuosity of his speech, gazed at him in half fear and wonderment.

"Tell me of your father, Lola," said D'Esmonde, in a low, soft voice, as he drew her low seat to his side.

"*He* was killed at Madrid; he died before the Queen!" said she, proudly.

"The death of a Toridor!" muttered the Priest, mournfully.

"Yes, and Pueblos, too, he is dead!"

"Not the little child that I remember——"

"The same. He grew up to be a fine man; some thought him handsomer than my father. My mother's family would have made a priest of him, but he chose the prouder destiny!"

"I cannot think of him but as the child—the little fellow who played about my knees, dressed like a Matador, his long silky hair in a net."

"Oh, do not—do not speak of him," cried the girl, burying her face between her hands; "my heart will not bear those memories."

The Priest's face was lighted up with a malevolent delight as he bent over her, as if revelling in the thought the emotions could call up.

"Poor little fellow," said he, as if to himself. "How I remember his [illegible] that he danced for me." He stopped, and she sobbed bitterly. "He said that Lola taught him."

She looked up; the tears were fast coursing along her cheeks, which were pale as death.

"Enough," said she, tremulously, "these thoughts will drive me mad; my brain is reeling even now."

"Let us talk of something else, then," said he. "When did you leave the 'Opera'—and why?"

"How can you ask?—you were at Seville at the time. Have you forgotten that famous marriage, to which, by your persuasion, I consented, was this scheme only one of those unhappy events which are to be the seed of future good?"

The sneer made no impression on the Priest, who calmly answered, "Even so, Lola."

"What do you mean, Sir?" cried she, angrily, "to what end am I thus? Was I so base born and so low? Was my lot in life so ignominious, that I should not have raised my ambition above a fortune like this?—the waiting woman of one whose birth is not better than my own."

"You are right, Lola, perfectly right, and with patience and prudence you will be her equal yet. Acton is an English noble——"

"What care I for that?" said she, passionately; "the marriage was a counterfeit."

"The marriage was a true and a valid one."

"And yet you yourself told me it was not binding."

"I had my reasons for the deceit, Lola," said he, persuasively. "You were deserted and desolate; such widowhood would have brought you to the grave with sorrow. It were better that you should strive against misery."

"Even in shame?" asked she, scornfully.

"Even in shame, for the shame would be short-lived; but Lord Norwood is alive and you are his wife."

"Lord Norwood! I have heard that name so often," said she, musingly.

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·e is not a coronet
·can and will make,"
.ust now speak to you,
·t, and subjects of which
·ly, and hear me, for for-
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·tle must be otherwise contested. You could
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. ·ay we must have trusty and faithful agents in
and in every rank in every people. From the
. the Czar, to the muttered discontent of the Irish
·now them all. To this end have we laboured anx-
.y for some time back, and already have we made great
n every Court of Europe we now receive tidings, and
i royal palace where our interests are unguarded. Some
:he glorious cause itself, some have their own price, some
ır hands from motives of self-interest or terror, but all are
'his Princess—this Dalton—I destined for a duty of the
Married to a man of Midchikoff's wealth and influence,
e done good service, but I scarcely dare to trust her; even
of herself she might fail me; and although in my power,
t upon her. Think, then, of my joy at finding you, one
lity I may hazard life itself. You can be all to me, and a
s more than ever she could."
," said the girl, steadily, but without the slightest sem-
r.
, my counsellor, my correspondent, Lola."
rice?"
name it, if your heart be set on mere worldly distinction.

I will prove your marriage, and although Norwood is not rich, his country never neglects the class he belongs to. Would you break the tie—the bond is in my keeping."

"I never loved him," cried she, passionately, "and you knew it. The marriage was one of those snares on which your mind never ceases to dwell."

"If you loved another, Lola?" said he, interrupting, and then waiting for her to finish the speech.

"And if I had," burst she forth, "am I credulous enough to fancy that your word can reconcile every difference of rank and fortune—that you can control destiny—and even coerce affection. No, no, Eustace; I have outlived all that!"

"Then were you wiser when you believed it," said he, gravely. "Now for his name."

There was a tone of almost commanding influence in which these last few words were uttered, and his dark full eyes were steadily fixed on her as he spoke them.

She hesitated to answer, and seemed to reflect.

"I ask no forced confession, Lola," said he, proudly, and rising at the same time from his seat. "In all the unreserve of our old affection, I told you *my* secret; *yours* is with yourself."

"But, can you——"

She stopped.

"I can, and I will aid you," said he, finishing her sentence.

"There is the name, then," cried she, as, with a passionate gesture she drew a sealed letter from her bosom, and showed him the superscription.

D'Esmonde almost started; but, recovering himself in an instant, he said,

"The address is not correct, Lola. It should be thus——" And taking a pen, he drew it across the last line on the cover, and wrote, instead, "Dewanpore Barracks, Calcutta." "We must talk together this evening," said he, restoring the letter, and, without more, withdrew.

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of union between Truth and a Thumb-screw!

you wish for military aid: substantially, I am well aware, th nothing, but it might assist in pushing your patriots, m, are a cautious race, a step further. This Dalton boy Austrian up to this—a regular 'God and the Emperor' have thrown more stubborn metal into the crucible, and it malleable.

bout the 'Converts;' and I must own that their defection r on Protestantism than any matter of glorification to us. sing in their exactions, and all fancy that no price is too sour of their alliance; not a shovel-hat amongst them who to be a 'Monsignore' at least!

ever, like my friend Lady Hester, are wealthy, and in this trouble they give us. On her security I have obtained the sum you wished for, but of a smaller amount, the par- I enclose. I know not if you will agree with me, but that nothing should be expended on the Irish press. Its al, and purely local; reserve all your seductions for the the other side of the Channel, and who, however igno- are always heard with respect and attention.

propose, nor, if I could, should I be of any

checks,' 'scotching the snake,' and so forth. It is now upwards of half a century since Europe has seen a real political convulsion; a new lesson is wanting. I often used to hope that you of the West might be able to give it. I had formed great expectations of Chartism at one time. It possessed the due elements of mischief in abundance; it was Infidel and Hungry; but it wanted the great requisites—determination and courage. The example must come from the Continent; and, in one respect, it is so much the better. Your home disturbers would be necessarily the enemies of the Anglican Church, whereas *our* anarchists here are inseparably associated with Protestantism. This 'coup' required some cleverness, but we at last accomplished it. Ronge's movement of secession gave the first opportunity; the Swiss troubles offered the second; a little more, and the *Bonnet rouge* will be the symbol of the Protestant faith. Mark the advantage of this: see the distrust with which every nation of the Continent will regard England and her constitution-mongering; look how they will be induced to associate her printed cottons with her Church, and connect the spread of her trade with the treacherous dissemination of her doctrines. So far, so good. And then, remember, that to all this anarchy and ruin the Church of the true faith alone offers any effectual opposition—the 'Platoon,' for the hour of conflict; but to the Priest must they come to consolidate the shattered edifice, to rebuild the tottering fabric of society. Men do not see this yet; and there is but one way to teach it—a tremendous lesson of blood and anarchy. This is in store for them, believe me.

"My great difficulty is to persuade these people to patience. They will not wait, as Napoleon did for the Prussians, 'till they were '*en flagrant delit;*' and yet, if they do not, the whole experiment goes for nothing. With all their hordes of horse, foot, and dragoons; their grape and canister; their grenades and rocket-batteries, they have not the courage of a poor Priest. His Holiness is, however, doing better: he has taken the whole *au sérieux*; he has brought himself to believe that moderate reforms—what are they?—will satisfy the wishes of demagogue ambition, and that when he has lashed popular fury into full speed, he can check it at will. Of course you guess what will follow; and you already see what a busy time is before us. Oh! my dear Michel, I can stop here, and, closing my eyes, revel in the glorious future that must succeed. I see the struggle before me; I know that some good men, mayhap some great ones, will fall in it; but in the distance I see the dome of St. Peter's rising majestically above the clouds of battle, and the countless millions kneeling, once more, before its altars!

"I do not clearly understand you about Ireland, although I agree in

of putting the Protestant rebel in the foreground. A conflict
ief with the government would be most useful. I have thought
eal on the subject, and am convinced that nothing would awe
more than the impression of any foreign assistance being given
surrection, while it would lend to *your* loyalty the grand trait
lity. This is a highly important feature. Remark how they
ing us with being ultra-montane just now, and think what an
ill this be to the sarcasm? I am sure—that is, if you concurred
-I could easily persuade some young fellows in this service to
movement. As officers, and well acquainted with military
ey would have a formidable effect in English eyes. I have two
n my mind already; one, a brother of my young Princess, that
el of whom I spoke in my last letter as my destined *chargé*
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ey talk, are always heard with respect and attention.

nnot go over as you propose, nor, if I could, should I be of any

use to you. You all understand your people, their habits and modes of thought, far better than we do, who have been fencing with Cardinals, and sparring with the Sacred College, for the last ten or a dozen years. Above all things, no precipitation; remember that your grand policy is the maintenance of that feverish condition that paralyses every effort of English policy. Parade all your grievances; but rather to display the submission with which you bear them, than to pray for their relief. Be touchy only for rifles; keep all your martyrdom for great occasions; never forget, that this time it is your loyality! is to be rewarded. Adieu, my dear Michel. Tell his Grace whatever you think fit of these, my opinions, and say, also, that he may rely on us here for withdrawing or confirming, as he pleases, any concessions he may deem proper to grant the English Government. We know his difficulties, and will take care not to augment them. As to the Cardinal's hat, let him have no doubts, only beg him to be circumspect, and that this is not the time to assume it! If men would but see what a great cause we have, and how it is to be won by waiting—nothing more, Michel—nothing more, believe me, than mere waiting!

"All that you tell me, therefore, about titles and dignities, and so forth, is premature. With patience you will be enabled to assume all, from which, a momentary precipitation would infallibly see you repulsed. A few of your leading men still cling to the ruinous notion of elevating Ireland; for Heaven's sake cease not to combat this. It is the Church—the Church alone for which we combat. Her difficulties are enough, without linkering her fortune to such a sinking destiny! You have many able men amongst you, and they ought to see this proposition in its true light.

"You are right—though you only through it out in jest—about the interest I feel for my little Princess and her brother. It was the charity of a relative of theirs—a certain Mr. Godfrey—that first gave me the entrance into my career. He sent me to Louvain as a boy, and thence to Salamanca, and afterwards to Rome. He paid liberally for my education, and I believe intended, had he lived, to have provided handsomely for me. The story has an ugly ending; at least the rumours are gloomy ones, and I would rather not revive their memory. Here have I fallen into a sad track of thought, dear Michel; and now it is past midnight, and all is silent about me, and I feel half as if I ought to tell you everything, and yet that everything resolves itself into nothing; for, of my actual knowledge, I possess not one single fact.

"Can you conceive the position of a man with a great, a glorious future before him—rewards the very highest his wildest ambition ever fancied—a sphere to exercise powers that he feels within, and but needing

field for their display? Picture to yourself such a man, and then fancy m tortured by one terrible suspicion—one damning doubt—that there a flaw in his just title to all this—that some day or other there may e up against him—he knows not how, or whence, or why—from the ry earth as it were, a voice to say, 'You are disowned, disgraced—u are infamous before men!' Such a terrible Hell have I carried for ars within me! Yes, Michel, this ulcer is eating at my very heart, and t it is only like a vision of evil—some mind-drawn picture, carried up om infancy through boyhood, and stealing on, year by year, into the ime of life, strengthening its ties on me like a malady.

"You will say this is a diseased imagination—the fruits of an over-rked brain, or, not improbably, the result of an overwrought vanity, hat would seek consolation for failures in the dim regions of superstition. It may be so; and yet I have found this terror beset me more in the asons of my strength and activity than in those of sickness and depression. Could I have given a shape and colour to my thoughts, I might have whispered them in the confessional, and sought some remedy against their pain; but I could not. They flash on my waking faculties like the memories of a recent dream. I half doubt that they are not eal, and look around me for the evidences of some change in my condition. I tremble at the first footstep that draws near my door, lest the new comer should bring the tidings of my downfal!

"I was at Rome—a student of the Irish college—when this cloud first broke over me. Some letter came from Ireland—some document containing a confession, I believe. I was summoned before the superiors, and questioned as to my family, of which I knew nothing; and as to my means, of which I could tell as little. My attainments at the college were inquired into, and a strict scrutiny as to my conduct; but though both were above reproach, not a word of commendation escaped them; on the contrary, I overheard, amid their whisperings, the terrible word 'Degradato!' You can fancy how my heart sank within me at a phrase so significant of shame and debasement!

"I was told the next morning that my patron was dead, and that, having no longer the means to support the charges of a Student, I should become a 'Laico;' in other words, a species of servant in the college. These were dreadful tidings; but they were short of what I feared. There was nothing said of 'Degredation.' I struggled, however, against the hardship of the sentence—I appealed to my proficiency in study—the prizes I had won—the character I bore, and so on; but although a few months more would have seen me qualified for the priesthood, my prayer was rejected, and I was made a 'Laico.' Two months afterwards I was sent to the convent of the 'Espiazione,' at Ancona. Many of

[illegible] the sufferings of that life—the awful [illegible] of that gloomy prison, where all are 'Degradati,' and where none are to be found save men stained with the foulest crimes. I was [illegible] there—a [illegible]—a servant of the meanest class—an [illegible] of study [illegible] in tracing others' thoughts to relieve the horrible solitude of my own. Labour—incessant, debasing labour—my lot from day till dawn.

'I have no [illegible] to the nature of my guilt. I declare solemnly before Heaven, as I write these lines, that I am not conscious of a crime—save such as the confessional has expiated—and yet the ritual of my daily life implied such. The offices and litanies I had to repeat, the penances I suffered, were those of the 'Espiazione.' I dare not trust myself to recal this terrible period—the only rebellious sentiment my heart has ever known sprung from that tortured existence. As an humble priest in the wildest regions of Alpine snow—as a missionary among the most barbarous tribes—I could have braved hardships, want, death itself, but as the 'Degradato,' dragging out life in failing strength, with faculties each day weaker, watching the ebb of intellect, and wondering how near I was to that moping idiotry about me, and whether, in that state, suffering and sorrow slept! Oh, Michel! my hands tremble, and the tears blot the paper as I write. Can this ordeal ever work for good? The mass sink into incurable insanity—a few, like myself, escape; and how do they come back into the world? I speak not of other changes: but what hardness of the heart is engendered by extreme suffering—what indifference to the miseries of others. How compassionless do we become to griefs that are nothing to those we have ourselves endured! You know well that mine has not been a life of indolence, that I have toiled hard and long in the cause of our faith, and yet I have never been able to throw off the dreary influence of that conventual existence. In the excitement of political intrigue, I remember it, least, in the whirlwind of passions by which men are moved. I can for a time forget the cell, the penance, and the chain. I have strong resentments too, Michel. I would make them feel that to him they sentenced once to 'Degredation,' must they now come for advice and guidance—that the poor 'Laico' can now sit at their councils and direct their acts. There is something so glorious in the tyranny of Rome, so high above the petty so [illegible] of mere kings, soaring beyond the bounds of realms and [illegible], crossing Alps and oceans, proclaiming its proud edicts in the [illegible] of Europe, declaring its truths in the silent forests of the [illegible] West, stirring the heart of the Monarch on his throne, thrilling the rugged breast of the Indian in his wigwam, that even to bear a banner

in its ranks is a noble privilege. And now I come back to these children, with whose fortunes I feel myself—I know not how—bound up. They were related to this Mr. Godfrey, and that, perchance, may be the secret link which binds us. The girl might have won a grand destiny—she had beauty, grace, fascination—all that men prize in these days of ours; but there was no high ambition—nothing beyond the thirst for personal admiration. I watched her anxiously and long. There was a weak goodness about her heart, too, that gave no promise of self-sacrifice. Such, however, as she is, she is mine. As for the boy, I saw him yesterday for the first time; but he cannot be a difficult conquest. Again I hear you ask me why can I turn from great events and stirring themes to think of these; and again, I own, that I cannot tell you. Power over every one, the humblest as the highest, the weakest in purpose and the strongest of heart—power to send forth or to restrain, to crush or to exalt—this is the prize of those who, like you and me, walk humbly, that we may reign proudly.

"And now, dear Michel, good-by. I have made you a confession, and if I have told little, the fault is not mine. You know all my sentiments on great events—my hopes, and my anticipations. I must leave this to-morrow or the day after, for there is much to do beyond the Alps. If Kings and Kaisers but knew as much as we poor Priests, the coming would scarce be a merry Christmas with them.

"Yours, in all truth and brotherhood,

"MATHEW D'ESMONDE.

"Feast of St. Pancratius, Hof. Thor., Vienna."

It was already daybreak when D'Esmonde finished his letter, but instead of retiring to bed, he opened his window, and sat enjoying the fresh air of the morning. Partly from habit, he opened his book of "offices;" but his eyes wandered, even from the oft-repeated lines, to the scene before him—the spreading glacis—where, already, the troops were mustering for parade. "What a strange thing is courage," thought he "I, who feel my spirit quail at the very rumbling sound of a gun-carriage, have a soul to see all Europe convulsed, and every nation in arms, undismayed!"

CHAPTER IX.

"THE CADET VON DALTON."

As Madame de Heidendorf's mornings were always passed in receiving the visits, or answering the letters of her political acquaintances, Kate was free to spend her hours with Frank, exchanging confidences, and talking of that dear home from which they were more separated even by circumstance than by space.

The Cadet had obtained leave for the entire day—an inconceivable favour in his eyes—and Kate was seated at her breakfast when he appeared. When they met the day before, Frank's undivided attention had been drawn to Kate herself—the change in her whole air and manner—that graceful dignity of mien which elevated his regard for her to a species of worship; now, however, he had time to be struck with the accessories of her position, the gorgeous chamber, the splendid silver of the service, the rich liveries, everything which bespoke her proud and affluent condition.

"I almost start back with shame, Kate," said he, "if, in passing these great mirrors, I catch a glimpse of my humble figure, so unsuited does it seem to magnificence like this; nor can I help thinking that your household agrees with me. With all their respectful courtesy, they must wonder when they look on the brother of their Princess."

"You know well, dearest Frank, that in your service the highest in the land must pass the ordeal of Cadetship."

"Which means half an hour for an Archduke, and a forenoon for a Serene Highness. Even Walstein took but a week to spring from the ranks to a Lieutenantcy; a month later saw him a Rittmeister; and already he commands a regiment."

"What a young soldier to have caught up the complaining cant about slow promotion," said Kate, laughing.

"Ten months a Cadet, and not even made Corporal yet," sighed Frank. "To be sure, I might have been, had it not been for the Stockhaus."

"And what may that be, dear Frank?"

"The Prison; neither more nor less. When I came here, Kate, the nephew, or grand-nephew, of the Feld-Marschal von Auersberg, I thought it became me to assume something like style in my mode of life. My comrades told me as much, too; and as I had no difficulty in

obtaining credit, I ran in debt everywhere. I lent to all who asked me, and gave away to many more. Every one said that the Feld would pay one day or other, and I never confessed how poor we were at home. I know I was wrong there, dearest Kate; I feel that acutely, now; but somehow the deception I began with others gained even more rapidly on myself. From continually talking of our Dalton blood, and our high position in our own country, I grew to believe it all, and fancied that some at least of these imaginings must be real. But, above all, I cherished the hope that promotion would come at last, and that I should live to be an honoured soldier of the Kaiser.

"In the very midst of all this self-deception, the Feld returns to Vienna, from a tour of inspection, and, instead of sending to see me, orders my Colonel to his presence. I know not, of course, what passed, but report alleges that for an hour the old General harangued him in terms the most bitter and insulting. Now, my dear sister, the wrath poured out upon a commanding officer does not become diminished as it descends through the successive grades of rank, and falls at last on the private. For *my* misdemeanour the regiment was ordered away from Vienna, and sent to Laybach, in the very depth of winter too. This could not help my popularity much among my comrades; and as I was now as destitute of credit as of means, you may fancy the alteration of my position—the black bread of the Commissary, instead of the refined cookery of 'the Schwan;' the midnight patrol, in rain or snow-drift, in place of the joyous carouse of the supper-table; the rude tyranny of a vulgar sergeant, in lieu of the friendly counsels of an equal; all that is menial and servile—and there is enough of both in the service—heaped upon me day after day; 'till, at last, my only hope was in the chance that I might ultimately imbibe the rude feelings of the peasant-soldier, and drag out my existence without a wish or a care for better.

"As if to make life less endurable to me, the officers were forbidden to hold intercourse with me; even such of the Cadets as were above the humbler class were ordered not to associate with me; my turns of duty were doubled; my punishments for each trifling offence increased; and there I was, a soldier in dress, a convict in duty, left to think over all the flattering illusions I had once conceived of the service, its chivalry, and its fame!

"I wrote to Walstein, telling him that if I could not obtain my freedom otherwise, I would desert! A copy of my letter, I know not how obtained, was sent to my Colonel, and I was sentenced to a month's arrest, a week of which I was to pass in irons. They now made me a rebel in earnest, and I came out of the 'Stockhaus' more insubordinate than I went in. It would weary, and it would fret you, dearest

sister, were I to tell all the petty schemes I formed of resistance, and all the petty tyrannies they brought down upon my head: the taunt of my 'gentle blood,' my 'noble origin,' my 'high descent,' being added to every cruelty they practised, till I was ready to curse the very name that associated me with this bitterness. They told me that a second desertion was always punished with death, and that even the attempt was accounted as the act. I resolved, then, to finish with this dreary existence, and I wrote a farewell letter to poor Nelly, telling her that, as I was certain of being taken, these were the last lines I should ever write. In this I repeated all I have now told you, and a vast deal more, of the hardships and indignities I had endured; and this, like my former letter, was sent back to me. Then came three months more of durance, after which I came out what they deemed a good soldier."

"Subdued at last," sighed Kate.

"Not a bit of it. Like a Banat charger, I had a kick in me, after all their teaching and training. I found out the lance-corporal of our company was the man who had discovered my letters. I sent him a challenge, fought, and wounded him. Here was another offence; and now the Minister of War was to deal with me himself; and I half fancied they would be glad to get rid of me. Far from it. The 'Stockhaus' again, and short fetters, my wrist to my ankle, were the sovereign remedies for all misdeeds. In this plight I made my entrance into Vienna."

"Did you never think of Uncle Stephen all this while, Frank—never appeal to him?"

"Ay, Kate, and what was worse, *he* thought of *me*, for he had my punishment-rolls brought to him, and although, from some good-natured interference they did not forward more than a fourth of my misdeeds, there was enough to condemn me in his eyes, and he wrote, 'No favour to this Cadet,' on the back of my certificate."

"Poor boy! so friendless and deserted."

"Persecuted by creditors, too," continued Frank, as excited by the recital of his sorrows he paced the room in a transport of anger; "fellows that never rested till they got me in their books, and now gave me no peace for payment. Out of three kreutzers a day, Kate—a penny English—I was to discharge all the debts of my extravagance, and live in style! A Dalton, well born and nurtured, in a position of ignominious poverty!"

"Not one to aid you!"

"Walstein was away in Bohemia with his regiment, and, perhaps, it were better so, for I had told him such narratives of our family, such

high-flown stories of our princely possessions, that I could not have had the courage to face him with an avowal of the opposite. At last I did make a friend, Kate; at least, one poor fellow took an interest in me, talked to me of home, of you and Nelly; mostly of her and of her curious carvings, which he prized almost as much as little Hans used. He sat with me many an hour under the trees of the Prater, or we strolled along in the shady aileys of the "Au Garten," and his companionship somehow always soothed and comforted me, for he was so stored with book learning, that he could ever bring out something from Uhland, or Richter, or Wieland, that suited the moment, just as if the Poet had one in his mind when he wrote it. How often have I wished that I were like him, Kate, and had a mind like his, teeming with its own resources against sorrow."

"Tell me more of him, Frank, dearest; I feel an interest in him already."

"And yet you would scarcely have liked him, if you saw him," said the boy, with a bashful and hesitating manner.

"Why not, Frank? His appearance might have been little promising, his face and figure commonplace——"

"No, no: not that—not that. Adolf was good looking, with a fine clear brow, and a manly, honest face; nor was his manner vulgar—at least for his station. He was a Pedlar."

"A Pedlar, Frank," cried Kate, growing scarlet as she spoke.

"Ay, I knew well how you would hear the word," said the boy; "I often used to fancy my high-bred sister's scorn if she could but have seen the companion whose arm lay around my neck, and who spoke to me as 'Thou.'"

Kate made no answer, but her cheek was crimson, and her lip trembled.

"You and Walstein were never out of my thoughts," continued Frank, "for I could fancy how each of you would look down upon him."

"Not that, Frank," said she, in confusion; "if he were indeed kind to you; if he were a true friend in that time of dreariness and gloom."

"So was he—with hand, and heart, and purse. And yet—confound that sense of pride, which poisons every generous movement of the heart, and will not let it throb in unison with one of humble fortune!—I never could get the Dalton out of my head. There it was, with that lumbering old fabric of an Irish house, our wasteful habits, and our idle dependants, all going down to ruin together; and instead of despising myself for this, I only was ashamed—at what, think you?—of my friendship for a Pedlar! Many a holiday have I kept my barrack-

room, rather than be seen with Adolf in the Volks Garten or the Graben. I liked to be along with him in the solitude of the Prater, or in our country walks; but when he asked me to accompany him to the Café or the Theatre, Kate—to some Ordinary in the Leopoldstadt, or some Wine-cellar on the Danube, I used to feign duty, or actually take a comrade's guard, to avoid it. How meanly you think of me for all this, Kate. I see, by the flush upon your cheek, what shame the confession has given you."

Kate's confusion grew almost intolerable; she twice tried to speak, but the effort was above her strength, and Frank, who mistook her silence for rebuke, at last went on:

"You may guess, Kate, from what I have now told you, how much soldiering has realised all my early hopes and ambitions. I suppose times were different long ago."

"Of course they were, or Uncle Stephen would not now be a Field-Marshal."

As if in echo to her words, at this moment a servant, throwing wide the door, announced "The Feld," himself. Frank fell back as the old General advanced into the room, bowing with a courtesy that would have done honour to a courtier. He was dressed in the uniform of his rank, and wore all his decorations, a goodly mass, that covered one entire side of his coat.

Approaching Kate with a manner of admirably blended affection and respect he kissed her hand, and then saluted her on either cheek. "Forgive me, my dear niece," said he, "if I have not been earlier to pay my respects, and say welcome to Vienna; but my note will have told you that I was on duty yesterday with the Emperor."

Kate blushed and bowed, for unhappily she had not read the note through. Frank's presence had made her forget all but himself. With all the gallantry of his bygone school, the old "Feld" proceeded to compliment Kate on her beauty and grace, expressing in proper phrase his pride at the possession of such a relative.

"The Empress was the first to tell me of your arrival," said he; "and nothing could be more gracious than the terms in which she spoke of you."

With a thrill of pleasure Kate heard these words, and greedily drank in every syllable he uttered. Not alone her betrothal to the Prince, but all the circumstances of her future destiny, seemed to be matters of deep interest to the Court, and poor Kate listened with wonder to the Feld as he recounted the various speculations her marriage had given rise to. She little knew within what a narrow circle the sympathies of Royalty are forced to revolve, and how glad they are of anything to

relieve the tedious monotony of existence. One most important question had already arisen, since the Empress had expressed a wish that the young Princess should be presented to her; but Madame de Heidendorf refused her permission, on the ground that she had not yet been presented at the Court of the Czar. All the difficulties of the two cases, the arguments for either course, the old General deployed with an earnestness, that if it at first amused, at last deeply interested Kate. The flattering sense of self-importance giving a consequence to trifles, which, if told of another, she would have smiled at.

"I was desirous of gratifying the Empress before I saw you, my dear niece," said he, taking her hand; but you may guess how much greater is my anxiety now that I have learned to know you. It will be, indeed, a proud day for the old Field Marshal when he shall present one of his own name and family, so gifted, and so beautiful. A thorough Dalton!" added he, gazing on her with rapture.

"How glad am I, Sir, to see that all the distinctions your great career has won have not effaced the memory of our old name and house."

"I have but added to it another as noble as itself," replied he haughtily. "Others have given their energies to degrade our ancient lineage. It is to be your task and mine, Madame la Princesse, to replace us in our rightful station."

Kate instinctively sought out Frank with her eyes, but could barely catch a glimpse of his figure within a recess of a window. More than once the poor Cadet had meditated an escape; but as the door was on the opposite side of the room he saw discovery would be inevitable. With a graceful courtesy the old Feld asked after Father and Nelly, expressing his wish to see and know them, in terms which plainly conveyed to Kate his utter ignorance of their station and habits.

"As a younger son myself, without the ties of fortune, I may be permitted to doubt how far the head of a distinguished house has a right from any considerations of personal gratification, to reside away from his country, Madame. I must own that my Nephew's conduct in this respect has not met my approval. I have not felt free to tell him so, our intercourse being for so many years interrupted; but you will say as much for me. Let him know that the great names of a nation ought not to die out in people's memories."

"You are aware, Sir," said Kate, timidly, "that Papa's means are not as they once were; circumstances of economy first suggested his coming abroad."

"A reason that always has appeared to me insufficient," said the

other, sternly. "He could have reduced his establishment at home—fewer hunters—less splendid banquets."

"Hunters and banquets!" sighed Kate; "how little he knows of us!"

"Here, I see nothing but the best fruits of his system," said he, kissing her hand with gallantry; "no cost could be accounted too much that aided the attainment of such perfection. I am too old a courtier not to distinguish between mere native gracefulness and that more polished elegance which comes of refined intercourse. My Niece is worthy to be a Princess! But your brother——"

"Oh! what of dear Frank?" cried she, eagerly.

"Simply this, Madame: habits of wasteful expenditure have unsuited him to the stern realities of a soldier's life. With his fortune, and his tastes, he should have sought service among those popinjays that English tailors make Lancers or Hussars of. He might have won the laurels that are gathered on Hounslow, or St. James's Park: he might have been distinguished in that barbaric warfare you call an Indian campaign; but here, in this empire, where soldiering means discipline, self-denial, hardship, endurance!—I was eight years a Cadet, Madame, twelve a sous-Lieutenant. I saw the decoration I should have received given to another. The Dienst Kreutz I had won was refused me, because I had not served twenty years; and yet, by accepting these, and hundreds like them, as the inevitable necessities of the service, I am what now you see me."

"And if Frank will be but patient——"

"He may be a Corporal within a year, Madame," said the Feld gravely, and with the air of a man who had advanced a somewhat bold pledge.

"But he must be an officer within a week, Sir," said Kate, taking the General's hand within her own. "I seldom ask favours, and as seldom are they refused me. The chivalry of Austria will surely suffer no attaint for one whose distinction it is to be *your* relative, and a Dalton. Nay, dear Uncle, this is the first, the very first request I have ever made of you. It would not be meet for me to say, in *your* presence, what a guerdon is his name for his good conduct."

"You are too sanguine, Madame. You do not know this boy."

"Every thought of his heart I know—every hope that sustains him. He himself has told me all his shortcomings."

"His insubordination?"

"Yes."

"Extravagance?"

"Yes."

His days of imprisonment?"

Yes."

His arrests in irons?"

All—everything; and what are they, save the boyish excesses of who, carried away by high spirits, and buoyed up by the flattering e of relationship to a great and distinguished name, has been led on ollies by the mere native warmth of temperament. It is easy to see r little he thought of himself, and how much of his Uncle!"

The old General shook his head dubiously.

'There, dear Uncle," said she, pressing him into a seat before a e with writing materials, "take that pen and write."

'Write what, dear child?" said he, with a softness very different from usual manner.

'I know nothing of the forms, nor the fitting phrases. All I t is that Frank should have his sword knot."

'You have learned the proper word, I see," said he, smiling, while balanced the pen doubtingly in his fingers. "The Colonel of his iment is an Imperial Prince."

'So much the better, Uncle. A Hapsburg will know how to reward alton."

'So then we begin thus," said the old General, whose half-suppressed le showed that he was merely jesting with her eagerness: "Imperial ncess. The Cadet Von Dalton, whose distinction it is to be the nd nephew of a very old soldier, and the brother of a very young ness——"

'Nay, surely, this will not do," said Kate.

'A very young Princess," resumed the Feld, as he continued to te, "who confiding in her own captivations and your Highness's lantry——"

'This is but jesting with me, Uncle, and I'm serious," said she, tingly.

'And am not I serious too, Madame?" cried he, laying down the . "If I ask promotion for a boy, whose whole career has been one action of discipline, whose services are all inscribed in the Prevôt-rshal's return, is it not better that I should press his claims on the rits of others than dwell upon his own misconduct? My dear child," l he affectionately, "there are natures that cannot bear a too sudden sperity, as there are individuals who cannot endure too sudden nges of climate. Our Dalton blood has a little of this same in-nity. Shall I tell you how I won my first step in the service. I at Hohenkirchen when Moreau began his celebrated retreat through defiles of the Schwartzwald. The company in which I served as a

simple corporal occupied a large farm-house, on an elevated plateau, above the road to Schweinfurt: we could see for miles along the valley, and our position was taken up to observe the movement of the enemy, and immediately report when his advanced guard came in sight. Our orders also were, to hold the place as long as we were able, and delay, as much as possible, the enemy's advance; in other words, if we could retard him by half a day, at the sacrifice of our party, our duty would be well done. These unpleasant situations arise now and then in war; but one comfort is, they seldom occur twice to the same man!

"The Captain who commanded us was an old officer, who had borne his slow promotion with many a heart-burning, and now resolved, come what might, to win his grade. Without waiting for the enemy, he took a patrol party, and set out to meet them. We never saw them again! Our Lieutenant, alike impatient, determined on a *reconnaissance*. He had scarcely been gone half an hour, when a quick rattling of fire-arms told us that he was engaged with the enemy. One man alone returned to tell us that the rest had fallen, and that the enemy was approaching in force. The command now devolved on me. I had been four times passed over in promotion, distinct acts of service left unnoticed, and my claims as much ignored as if I was the veriest dolt. I will not pretend to say that I bore these disappointments without pain, but they taught me one lesson at least, 'that duty is above all consideration of self.' I well knew what was expected of us, and resolved if possible to fulfil it. I prepared at once for a stout resistance—a hopeless, of course, but an obstinate one. Well, I will not imitate the tardiness of the duty by a similar prolixity: we held the farm for two hours, during which the roof was twice on fire from the enemy's shells; and when, at length, they stormed the place, our defence was reduced to eight men, commanded by a corporal with two shot-wounds in his chest. We were made prisoners, and carried away to Strasburg, from whence I was exchanged under a cartel, and came back to my regiment as a Lieutenant. Had I merely sought promotion, Madame, and followed the dictates of ambition and not of duty, I had perhaps fallen like the others. It was in the very forgetfulness of myself lay my prosperity and my reward."

Kate's eyes sought out Frank, resolved on one effort more for her object, but the boy was gone. He had contrived to slip away unseen during the conversation, and was now waiting at the corner of the street, impatient for the General's departure, to return to his sister.

"I am to have the honour of dining in your company to-day," said the Feld, rising to take leave. "Let me hope that my obduracy will not weaken your regard for one so proud of being your uncle."

"No, uncle," said she, "and chiefly since I do not believe in the obduracy, and have full faith in the affection."

With every testimony of regard, they now took leave of each other, and the General retired as Kate betook herself to her own room.

She had scarcely left the apartment when the Archduke entered it. Madame de Heidendorf had told him that the Princess was there with her uncle, and he came expressly to see her. "Gone again," exclaimed he; "am I never to see this mysterious beauty?" while he threw his eyes around the room. "What's this addressed to myself here," added he, as he caught sight of the paper which the Feld had half written. "To his Imperial Highness the Archduke Franz Albrecht, commanding the Eleventh Regiment of Infantry." Rapidly glancing over the few lines, he at once caught their meaning, and detected the playful spirit in which they were conceived. "The fair Princess must not be disappointed in her opinion," said he, laughingly, as he took up the pen and wrote. "Too happy to anticipate the unexpressed wish, the Archduke appoints Cadet von Dalton to a Lieutenancy in the Hussars, of the Würtemberg Regiment," and signing his well-known initials at the foot, he sealed and addressed the paper to the Princesse de Midchikoff. This done, he left the house, passing as he went a young Cadet, whose military salute he scarcely noticed, nor knew the anxious heart for whose happiness he had just provided.

Young Frank stood respectfully at the salute as the Prince passed, and then bounded away to rejoin his sister. The drawing-room, however, was empty, and it was by mere chance that he saw the letter, on which the address was scarcely dry. Taking this with him, he hastened to her room. "A letter for you, Kate," cried he, "and with a royal seal, too!"

"Poor Frank," said she, coming out to meet him. "That I should have such tidings for you! The Feld is obdurate and unyielding. He fancies that there is no road to honour save the old track he has trod himself."

"I knew as much, Kate. Had I stayed longer in the room, I could not have refrained from bursting out to say, 'Hold, Sister, dearest, not the best grade in all the service is worth so much solicitation. I'll carry the musket while I must, and the day they make me an officer I'll smash the sword across my knee and leave them!'"

Kate broke the seal of the packet, without answering this passionate speech, and then, with a cry of joy, exclaimed, "Here it is, Frank! The Prince himself has given you the rank, and in the Hussars, too!"

"Let me see it," cried the boy; "let me see it." And tearing the paper from her hand, he read it again and again. "I scarce know—I

can scarce believe this real; but a Prince's word—a royal promise, Kate, is surely sacred."

"Of that there can be no doubt, Frank."

"And I am a Hussar, and an Officer," said he, with a burst of delight. "I'd not change with the Kaiser this minute, Kate."

"My dear, dear Frank," said she, passing her arm around his neck.

"And to owe it all to you, my sweet Kate! If anything could enhance the pleasure of this piece of fortune, it is this fact. And such a regiment, Kate—The Prince Paul's. The turappé all one mass of gold, and the chako splendid, and their horses the true Hungarian breed—the native horse crossed with the Arab! I feel already as if I were in the saddle, and careering wildly about. Oh, Kate, what glorious news!"

Again and again he embraced her in his ecstasy, and she hiding her head upon his shoulder, tried to suppress the burst of emotions which filled her heart, for she thought at what a price she purchased the power she wielded.

They sat long with hands close locked beside each other—neither speaking—each travelling his own road of thought; and how wide apart they lay!

CHAPTER X.

"VIENNA."

We cannot afford to linger in Vienna, nor speak of the week—the most brilliant of all her life—Kate passed there. It was the first burst of that ambition which had so long taken possession of her, and she saw herself, at length, in all the pride of her station, and her beauty the object of a hundred flatteries.

Fêted at the Court, distinguished by the special attentions of the Princes, most courteously received in all the society of the most exclusive capital of Europe, the whirl of pleasure and excitement as effectually precluded thought as it defied reflection. Hitherto she had seen the world only as a dependant, or at least as something appertaining to Lady Hester, in whose caprices she was bound to share, making partnery, as it were, in all her likings and dislikings; but now, she was become the centre around which all these attentions revolved, and her own will was the directing impulse of every action.

Of all the cities of the Continent, Vienna was most remarkable for almost instinctively adopting the tone of its Court in respect to a distinguished visitor. There was something like intuition in the way in

ich they guessed the feeling of Royalty, and as quickly made it eir own.

The restricted limits of the first society, of course, made this practible, as well as the fact that all belonging to it were more or less gaged in the service of the Emperor. Kate Dalton was now to enjoy is flattery, and find herself, wherever she went, the special object of tention.

At the Hof Theatre—where they played her favourite operas; at the eat reviews in the Prater, at the balls of the Palace, or the déjeunes ' Schönbrunn, she seemed the occasion of the fête, and to do *her* nour, all appeared assembled. Carried away by the triumphant delight ' pleasure, so associated with power, she either forgot at times the ice at which her greatness had been purchased, or was disposed to still e beatings of her heart by the thought, "My destiny is chosen; it is o late to look back." To have grieved over her lot, besides, would ive seemed an utter selfishness, seeing that she was the means of ispensing such happiness to all her family. Her poor Father placed ee more in comfort; Nelly free to follow the dictates of her charming ncy, without the alloying sense of toil; and dear Frank, in all the uberant joy of his promotion, eternally reminding her that she was is patroness. The quick clatter of his charger's hoofs in the courtard, the clank of his sabre as he ran up the stairs, were but the glad relude to his daily outpouring of gratitude! Aye, "to be sorry now, ould be but selfish."

Such was the philosophy in which she wrapt herself; and day after ay the feeling gained strength within her. It was true there were oments when all the sophistry gave way, and her affections flowed ll and strong in the deep channels of her heart. Then, indeed, she w the emptiness of all this gorgeous parade—how little it gave of al happiness—how seldom it ever called forth one generous feeling, r one high desire, and she wished the Fates had dealt otherwise with er. At times, she almost longed for the humble home, in all its verty, with nothing but Nelly's bright smile and gentle voice to eer its solitude! It may have been this conflict—for conflict it was —that gave to her demeanour a certain calm dignity, which, in the itical estimation of society, elevated her high above any charge of ivolity or capriciousness. She was a thought graver, perhaps, than r years; but the feeling imparted an indescribable grace to one whose auty was the very type of brilliancy. After all, these were but passg clouds; nor did she ever suffer herself to recur to the past, save hen wayward memories would obtrude uncalled for.

At last, came a letter from Lady Hester; and, although not a long

[illegible] all her endeavours could not efface from [illegible] all the old familiar names with [illegible]

[illegible] all the capricious irritability [illegible] a kind of importunate piety. She had grown [illegible] and her life a string of religious observances. [illegible] on the self-imposed round of her mortifications and penances, she went on.

"D'Esmonde has just returned, and delights me by saying that you are quite free from any contagion as to the errors of the Greek Church. Of course, outwardly you must conform: even if Midchikoff did not insist, his countrymen would; but he says that St. Ursula is the sure recourse in such cases, and mentions the instance of a Nun who took lessons in Spanish from the Devil, and, by the aid of the blessed Ursula, was nothing the worse.

"I told Jekyll, who left this on Friday, to send me an image of St. Ursula, that I might forward it to you; but the careless wretch has sent me a statuette of Fanny Ellsler by mistake. He discovered his error, however, and has written me a most humble letter, mentioning, by the way, that he was doing a 'Novena' for penance, and danced the Polka all the preceding night, with a sharp peg in the sole of his foot. With all his oddity, there is a great deal to like in him.

"I have only once heard from the Onslows; their conduct has been [illegible] shocking; they are not ruined at all, but got up the story, I verily believe, just to destroy my nerves. Sir S. is living in Ireland, at that place with the horrid name, your father used to talk of, with Sydney; and George has gone to India, a Major, I think, in some cavalry regiment. At Grounsell's kind suggestion, I have been cut off with a miserable allowance of fifteen hundred a year; but even with this I am content. St. Brigitta of Cleves lived on hard peas, and never wore anything but an old sack for the last seventeen years of her life; and Celestine has got a charming pattern of a capote, *à la* Cistercine, which, when made of white cashmere, will be perfectly simple and very becoming. I wear my hair now always in bands, and very low on the face. D'Esmonde says I'm the image of the Madonna of Dominichino, which, you may remember, I always preferred to Raphael's.

"Cardinal Bruschetti has been spending a few days here, and I cannot tell you the charm I have felt in his society, contrasted with the frivolous dissipation I have been used to. He is so suave, and so gentle, so persuasive, without importunity, and so conciliating withal. Not the least austerity about him; but at times actually gay! He quite approves of my having kept Fripponi as my cook. 'A change of cuisine,' said he, 'in-

volves a change of digestion, a change of temperament, and a moral change;' alterations far too important to be incurred at once. This is so far pleasant, as certainly the man is an admirable artist. His Eminence said yesterday that the salmi of ortolans was a dish fit for the Pope. We drive out, or row, every day, on the lake, and I shall be quite lonely when he leaves this. I am curious to know if you remember a bust of him in the Vatican. He was, and indeed is, a remarkably handsome man; and his leg has been modelled I can't say how often. He asks me to whom I am writing, and begs you will remember him in your prayers; how touchingly simple, is it not?

"I ventured last night on a bit of importunity, and asked his Eminence a favour. That poor dear Jekyl, you know, is miserably off. His family, all so wealthy, he says, and only allow him a few hundreds a year; and with his generous habits and wastefulness this must be actual want. Well, I asked the Cardinal if there might not be some way of sending him out as a Missionary—like St. Vincent de Paul. I'm certain he'd not like the dress nor the bare feet, but he'd be so happy with those charming Tonga islanders, who, such is their zeal, that they actually give four and five scalps for a wax image of the Virgin. His Eminence hinted that there might be difficulties, but he'd think of it!

"Your Prince passed through here on Tuesday on his way to Naples; he wants to see 'La Giovina' dance in that new ballet of 'Paradiso.' They say she is perfectly lovely. The Prince asked after you, and said something about its not being etiquette for him to write to you, or that you should write first, or, I really forget what; you know the slurring way he has of talking, and how he walks away before he has finished. He's worse than ever, I think, or probably it is *I* that have less patience with him now since you are gone!

"Jekyl told me—in strict confidence, remember—that M—— did not stand well with his court, and that there would be nothing wonderful in the Czar's refusing his leave for the marriage. What you ought to do in that case I cannot conceive; a Convent, I suppose, would be the only thing. After all, it might probably have been as well if you had taken poor George. The estate is still a good one, and he has some amiable points in his character, and he certainly loved you. I never told you the thousand confessions he made me, nor his entreaties for my intercession, but there is no harm now, in letting you hear them. It is, however, impossible to say with whom one could live happily! George begged of me to send him every letter you wrote to me, and of course you can use the knowledge of the fact at your discretion.

"Now, for two little commissions, my dear Kate, and I have done. I want you to get me a case of Tokay from the Teleki estate—mind,

[illegible] Paul's, which, his Eminence says, wants the oily flavour. Some of the Archdukes will manage this for you. I'm certain your long eyelashes have got further than this already. The second is, to send me a [illegible] of Bohemian [illegible]—Schwartenschild's, if possible. The Cardinal says that fat is become as scarce as true piety, and that a well-fed buck is as rare as a good Christian!

"Are they wearing their corsages pointed at the back?—not that I care, dearest, for I am above such vanities, but Celestine wishes to know. When you receive the St. Ursula, keep her in your own room, and with her face to the west; and so good-by, and, with many prayers, believe me,

"Affectionately, yours THEODOSIA,

"Late HESTER ONSLOW.

"Could you, by any chance, send me a good miniature of yourself?—perhaps you guess for what purpose. Haselquist's oil picture is too large for what I want; and, besides, is really not like you. Even with all its imperfections his Eminence sits looking at it for hours of an evening, and says he can scarcely fancy anything lovelier. I do not ask after Madame de H——, for I hate the woman. His Eminence has told me such things of her! But of course you can only make the best of it for the present, and get on as well as you can.

"D'Esmonde tells me that Frank is a fine boy, and very good-looking, but fearfully dissipated; but I suppose the service is like the Life Guards with us—and what can one expect? *Apropos* to this, Norwood has written to me twice some inexplicable nonsense about you, which I have not replied to. What does he mean by 'treating a flirt like a flounce?' Jekyl says that the Police have stopped his passport, or he should have been after you to Vienna. This is quite unintelligible to me, and I don't know why I repeat it."

Never did a frivolous letter give more serious thought, nor bring gloomier reflections, than did this epistle to Kate Dalton. Her mind dwelt far less on the paragraph which concerned her own future, than on that which spoke of George—his devoted affection and his enduring sorrow! And so it was true that he loved her! He had even confided the avowal to another, and asked for aid and counsel. Why had he then concealed it from herself? Was the fault hers? Had her own conduct been the reason? Had her encouragement of any other estranged him, or was the teaching of the society in which she moved the reason? Poor fellow! how unfairly had she treated him—even to that very last incident of their last meeting!—and now they were to meet no more! No! Death itself could not more effectually separate them than did

space and destiny! Even this she felt to be better, far better, than the chances of renewed intimacy in the world. Lady Hester had not told her why she had never divulged her secret; still less to what end she revealed it now, when the knowledge must be only misery. The mention of Norwood, and the vague, half threat connected with his name, gave her but little uneasiness, since her mind had but space for one absorbing thought—George loved her! There was the sum of every reflection; and all the world around her, in its splendour or its brilliancy—the tortuous paths of political intrigue—the quiet byways of home—affection—the present and the future—were all as nothing when weighed against this one thought.

If her first impression had been to blame Lady Hester for revealing the secret, her second was to thank her with her whole heart. She remembered D'Esmonde, too, and the reasonings by which he accompanied the delivery of the letter; and she felt that this consciousness was a blessing of which no vicissitude could rob her—that come what might of disappointment or sorrow in life, here at least, in her heart of hearts, was one hoarded treasure to compensate for all. If there were but one to whom she could confide her secret—with whom she could talk over her sorrow—she thought that she would be contented. To Nelly, she dared not; to Frank, she could not speak of it; what, then, of Nina? Alas! it was no longer a secret to *her!* Nina had seen the picture, and although nothing in her manner betrayed the slightest consciousness, Kate knew her too well not to feel herself in her power.

Nina's demeanour, however, exhibited nothing of insolent triumph; on the contrary, her manner was gentle, even to submissiveness, and something almost affectionate seemed to mingle with the feeling in which she fulfilled her duties. Kate remarked this, and only needed the courage to take advantage of it. At first, the very idea of Nina's consciousness was torture; but day by day this terror grew weaker, till at last she actually wished that the moment of explanation was over, and that she could pour out all her griefs before her. She may have loved, unhappily, herself; and if so, will pity me. In any case a frank avowal on my part will show that I knew nothing of his heart, and but little of my own, till "too late." We are never to meet again, and so-and-so; in fact, with many a casuistry, she satisfied herself that mere memory could never be a sin—that there could be nothing very wrong in looking back as often as the future seemed lowering and gloomy. It is hard to say if there might not have been some leaven of "pique" in these reasonings. The Prince, according to Lady Hester, if he had not entirely forgotten, was already indifferent about her. Some uncertainty of ceremonial prevented his writing, or hearing from her; and at this

[illegible]

[illegible] These were the two [illegible] Now Kate was quite resolved [illegible] reason why she might [illegible]

With all the force of these [illegible] the awkwardness of the confession [illegible] herself would take the [illegible] ever, appeared dead to every hint [illegible] the drift of any remark [illegible] pushed Kate's temper to the [illegible] stupidity. "Is it possible—can it be that I am deceived—that she has not recognised the miniature?" thought Kate. "Is my secret still in my own keeping?" As this thought struck her, everything appeared to [illegible] it—the girl's manner, devoid of every trait of impertinence and actual humble to servility. "Oh, if I could but be sure of this—if I could know that I could bury both my shame and my sorrow together!" In this vacillating state of suspense—one day, all hope and confidence—the next, terror and dread, she lived on, till the period drew nigh for her departure from Vienna.

Madame de Heidendorf had delayed beyond her intention, in the hope of receiving some French news; and Kate eagerly watched the post for some tidings from home—for home it still was, in every feeling of her heart.

"No letters again, Nina?" said she, despondently, as the maid entered the room.

"None, Madame."

"Have your friends forgotten you, Nina, as well as mine appear to have done?"

"Nina has but few friends, Madame; and still fewer would think of writing [illegible]

"Poor Nina!" said Kate, affectionately; and the blood rushed to the girl's face at the words, and her eyes flashed with an expression of sudden passion.

"No pity, Madame!—no pity!" cried she, with a voice full of emotion, "or I may forget myself—forget myself and you also!" And, with these words, she hurried from the room, without waiting for more. Kate sat, shocked and abashed by the girl's violence; and yet neither daring to reprove her nor even remonstrate with her. What abject slavery was this to feel! How mean did she seem to her own heart!—what rottenness was within that gilded splendour by which she was surrounded! Where was the ambitious envy with which she once looked up to the rich and powerful, now? Where that intense desire to be among the great and the titled? and with whom would she not have changed conditions—even to Nina herself?

It is not weak of heart and low of courage that one should face the great Journey of Life. Its trials and crosses, even to the most fortunate, demand all that we can summon of Hope and of Energy. And yet so was it that she was about to begin the road—the long and dreary road before her! As she sat thus musing, a great noise was heard from the street without. She arose and opened the window. The whole Platz was crammed with people, eagerly talking and gesticulating. A surging, waving motion, too, seemed to sway them; and at length she could detect that they were slowly proceeding onward towards the gate of the city. The deep roll of a drum then turned her attention, and, in the far distance, she saw the glancing bayonets of an infantry column as they advanced.

Military spectacles are of too frequent recurrence in Vienna to create much surprise or excitement, and yet evidently, from the looks and gestures of the people, they were both present here. The band of a regiment struck up the national hymn of Austria, and as the proud notes swelled into the air, a dark body of Tyrolese Jägers poured into the Platz. Still there was no enthusiasm of the people. They listened to the loyal sounds in cold apathy. To the Tyrolese succeeded a Grenadier battalion, after which came a long dense column of infantry of the line—their knapsacks on their backs, and their bread rations strapped above them. Behind these was the artillery—the long-tailed black horses giving a solemn look to the procession, as its clanking sounds fell mournfully on the ear. From the wide Platz they now moved on, and passing out of the Körtner Gate defiled into the "Glacis." But a moment before and that immense space was empty; and now, from every avenue of the city, troops came pouring in like rivers to the sea. The black-plumed hunters from Tyrol, the gigantic Croat Grena-

diers, the swarthy Bohemian Cuirassiers, and the white-cloaked Dragoons of Austria—all were seen advancing and forming as if in battle array. While Kate's eye ranged eagerly over the field in search of the blue uniform of the Hungarians, Madame de Heidendorf entered the room with an open letter in her hand.

"What can this mean?" asked Kate, anxiously. "It is surely not a mere review?"

"Far from it, Madame," said the Countess, imposingly; "the great drama is about to begin. News has come that Italy is in open revolt, and fresh troops are to be despatched thither with all speed—twelve thousand are to march to-day, eight more to-morrow."

"And Frank——"

She stopped abashed by the disdainful expression of Madame de Heidendorf's face.

"Your brother's regiment, Madame, will form part of the force, and he will, of course, contribute the importance of his presence! How happily constituted must be the mind that can turn from the grand theme of a whole nation's destiny to the petty fortunes of a Corporal or a Sous-Lieutenant."

"And yet so it is," replied Kate, boldly; "dear Frank is nearer to my heart than all that I see yonder. Oh, yes, Madame," cried she, replying to the glance of scorn the Countess bestowed, "it is quite true. Mine is an ignoble spirit; my affections are linked with lowly objects—would that my ambitions had never risen above them!"

What reply Madame de Heidendorf might have given to this speech, so much more daring than any she had uttered before, there is no knowing, when Frank burst into the room and clasped his sister in his arms.

"I have but a moment, Kate, and we are off—off to Italy;" and then, seeing the Countess, the boy bowed courteously, and apologised for his abrupt entrance. "Count Stephen has got the command and placed me on his Staff."

"I hope you may merit this proof of his confidence, Sir," said Madame de Heidendorf, haughtily.

"Frank will be a brave soldier, Madame," broke in Kate. "He is a Dalton."

"He must be true as well as brave. Fidelity is needed now as much as valour."

"And who will dare to question mine?" cried Frank; and then, as if impatient that he should have been led away from a dearer theme, he placed his arm within Kate's and drew her towards the window. "I had so much to say to you, my dearest sister: I have been thinking of

spicuous, both from his size and the soldierlike character of a figure, that not even old age seemed able to impair.

"How provoking, my sweet niece," said he, taking Kate's hand between both his, "now to part, just as I was learning the happiness of knowing you. Here are all these gentlemen grumbling and complaining about leaving their homes and families, and yet I'll wager there is not one amongst them carries away a heavier heart than I do. Come into this room, my dear; let us have five minutes together;" and Kate took his arm, while he led her forward. Madame de Heidendorf, meanwhile, seated herself on a sofa, and summoned the most distinguished officers of the party to inform her as to all that was going forward.

It was one of her favourite affectations to be deeply versed in military tactics, not that she acknowledged herself deficient in any art or science; but soldiering was her strong point. She therefore questioned and cross-questioned these unhappy gentlemen at great length.

"You have no mortars? Do I hear you aright, Colonel Ivabowsky? No mortars?"

"None, Madame."

"And how, may I ask, do you mean to reduce Milan to ashes?"

This was a very puzzling question; and she repeated it in a still more commanding tone.

"Perhaps that may not be deemed desirable, Madame," modestly insinuated another Officer.

"Not desirable, Sir? You said, not desirable. Why, really I shall begin to fancy I ought to go to school again in military matters. Are you aware, Sir, it's the very centre of these wretches; that it is fed from Switzerland and Piedmont with all that is infamous in political doctrine? Milan must be bombarded, Sir!"

The Colonels bowed courteously to an opinion expressed with so much authority.

"You'll find at least that the Field-Marshal will be of my opinion," continued she. "As a military position, it is worth nothing."

"But as a capital city, Madame," mildly interposed the Colonel.

"The old story," said she, contemptuously. "Women and children!"

"Most legitimate objects of protection, I trust, Madame."

But she turned contemptuously away, as if controversy with such an adversary was beneath her.

"We have three rocket-batteries, Madame," interposed a Staff Officer, desirous of offering himself to her notice.

"I hope you'll use them with effect, Sir. I envy you the pleasure of seeing them plunging amidst that vile mob it is the fashion to call the people now-a-days."

Teaching the Old Idea how to shoot.

'I hope we shall do our duty, Madame," said an old, stern-looking jor, who felt little flattered at this interference.

'I should like to see more chivalry—more ardent devotion in the enders of a Monarchy," said the Countess. "I can understand cold-s in the lower classes, but that the well-born and the noble should be thetic and slow to move, is beyond my comprehension."

"Bey'm Blistzen," retorted the Major, "that is not bad! Here we going to shed our blood for the Kaiser, and we are told that it is not ough, without we are born Counts and Barons."

"What is it, Heckenstein?" said Count Dalton, as he entered the om, and laid his hand familiarly on the other's shoulder. "I have sel-m seen you look so angry."

But the old soldier turned away without a reply.

"Madame de Heidendorf," said the old General, "I know not what u have said to offend an old and tried servant of the Emperor—a sol-r of Wagram and Austerlitz—a faithful follower, when the fortunes of s great Empire were at the lowest. But, believe me, these are not nes to flout loyalty and despise fidelity."

"The times are worse than I thought them," said the Countess, "when se principles have infected such men as Count Dalton. I had cer-nly hoped that his young relative would have received a very diffe-nt lesson at his outset in life, nor can I wonder if such teachings end evil. Here is the Archduke. How I wish his Highness had come a le earlier."

As she spoke, the Prince entered, with all the careless ease of his ordi-ry manner. It was impossible to detect from his countenance whether regarded the event as a serious one, or simply one of those popular nmotions which are ever occurring in a large empire.

"I know you are discussing politics, or something akin to them," said laughingly. "Madame de Heidendorf has her 'cabinet counte-nce' on, and Auersberg is looking as fierce as a Field-Marshal ought do when contradicted. Come, General, present me to the Princess. is an honour I have been long desiring. How tired you must be of this, Madame," said he to Kate. "Such wise people as will not k gossip—such high-minded souls as never will condescend to say a od thing, or even hear one, are insupportable." And, seating him-lf beside her, he rattled on about Vienna, its society, and its pleasures, th all the ease and flippancy of a young fashionable of the day, while, an attitude of deep respect, not unmixed with a dash of impatience, od the old Count before him.

"What does Auersberg want to tell us?" said the Prince at last, oking up in the old General's face.

"To say adieu, your Royal Highness."

"You don't go with the troops, surely?" said the Duke, laughing.

"At the head of my own regiment, your Royal Highness."

"Ah, by-the-by, the Auersbergs are in your brigade. Very proper that. And is this my *protégé?*" said he, taking Frank's arm, and drawing him forward. "There's your best example, Sir. Be only as good a soldier, and the name of Dalton will be a title of nobility amongst us. Good-by, Lieutenant. General, farewell. Give that 'Canaille' a lesson quickly, and come back to us as soon as you can."

Kate rose and followed Frank out of the room. For a few seconds they were closely locked in each other's arms, without speaking. "Oh, Frank, dearest! when are we to meet again—and how?" cried she, passionately.

"In pride and happiness, too, Kate," said the boy, joyfully. "I have no fears for the future. But what is this, sister, dearest—gold?"

"Do not refuse me, Frank. It is the only happiness left me."

"But this is the Russian's, Kate."

"No, believe me, it is not. Count Stephen has made me his heir; he has given me all his fortune. Even good luck can come too late!" said she, with a sigh.

"Do not leave this till I write to you, Kate. I will do so very soon—that is, if I can; but these are anxious times. You know, Kate"—here the boy whispered in a voice low and tremulous from agitation—"you know, Kate, that I only left the ranks a couple of days ago. I can tell, then, better than all these great folk, what soldiers think and say; they are not as they used to be. Lead them against the Frenchman, and they will fight as they have ever fought, but if it be to fire on their own townfolk—to charge through streets, where they lounged along, hand-in-hand with the people, like brothers—they will not do it."

"This is very alarming, Frank. Have you told the Count?"

"No: nor would I for worlds. What! betray my comrades, and be called on before a Court-Martial to say who said this, and what man said t'other."

"But could you not, at least, give him some warning?"

"And be ordered from his presence for the presumption, or told that I was a rebel at heart, or such tidings had never been uttered by me. The old "Feld" would as soon believe that this earth was cut adrift to wander at hazard through all space, as that treason should lurk behind an Austrian uniform. It would be an evil hour for him who should dare to tell him so."

"Oh, Frank, how terrible is all this!"

"And yet I do not despair; nay, Kate, but I am even more hopeful

it; and, as Walstein says, if the Empire halt so long behind the rest Europe, she must one day or other take a race to come up with it."

"And is Walstein a—a——" she stopped.

"No, he's very far from a Democrat or a Republican. He's too well , and too rich, and too good-looking, to be anything but a Monarchist. , if you but saw him. But hark! there are the trumpets! here e the 'Würtemburgs;' and there's my charger, Kate. Is he not ndid?—a Banat horse, all bone and sinew."

"How I should like to have been a man and a soldier," said she, hing deeply.

"There, that's Walstein; that's he with the scarlet dolman!" cried nk; "but he's coming over; he sees us. No! he's passing on. d you see him, Kate; did you remark him?"

"No, Frank, dearest, I see nothing but *you*—my own fond brother." d she fell upon his neck, weeping.

"Herr Lieutenant!" said a Hussar, with his hand to his cap.

"Yes, I'm ready; I'm coming!" cried Frank; and with one long last brace he tore himself away, springing down the stairs in mad haste.

"Madame de Heidendorf is good enough to say she will come and the troops defile from the Glacis," said the Archduke to Kate, as, overwhelmed with sorrow, she stood where Frank had left her. Perhaps you would do us the honour to come also?"

Kate accepted the invitation at once, and hurried to her room for a net.

"Not that one, Madame la Princesse," said Nina, eagerly; "the ow with black lace, rather; the national colours will be a flattery to Royal Highness."

"What a coquette you are, Nina."

"And how irresistible would Madame be, were she to condescend to even a little of one," said Nina, smiling.

"Perhaps I may yet," said Kate, half sighing as she spoke; and ina's dark eyes sparkled as she heard her. "But what do you mean by quetry, Nina?" asked she, after a pause.

"It may mean much, Madame, or very little. With such as I am, may be a rose-coloured ribbon; with Madame la Princesse, it may be smile that wins royalty. Coquetry, after all, is a mere recognition of iration. An old Spanish dramatist says, 'That a glance from bright es is like the hoisting of an ensign to acknowledge a salute.'"

"How you run on, Nina, and how ashamed I feel when I catch my- f afterwards thinking over your words."

Nina laughed merrily at this confession, while she opened the door for

Kate to pass out. In a moment after, Kate was seated beside the Archduke, and Madame de Heidendorf followed in another carriage.

The Archduke was neither very good looking nor agreeable. His manners were not remarkable for any peculiar elegance, nor was there in his air and bearing any of that special charm which very often seems the prerogative of royal personages; and yet it would have been excessively difficult to persuade Kate of all this, as she drove along the streets, crowded with uncovered heads. The clank of the escort that rode at either side, the quick roll of the drum, and the rush out of the guard to salute as he passed, created a sensation of pleasure in her mind like the enjoyment of a delighted child. Oh, if Nelly could but see her now!—if dear old Papa were but there to look at her—and Hanserl!—little Hans, that loved the Hapsburg House as he loved the Patron Saint of his own village!

It was, indeed, worth something to taste of splendour like this! And now she issued forth into the spacious Glacis, glittering with thousands of bayonets, and trembling under the tramp of the moving squadrons. The whole line saluted as he drove slowly past—band after band taking up the sounds, till the proud hymn of Austria filled the whole air. The soldiers cheered, too, loud and long, for his Imperial Highness was beloved by the army, and, like all his house, was a thorough soldier.

"You have never seen our troops under arms before?" said he, with a proud elation in his look; "they are fine fellows, and faithful as they are brave!" He was about to say more, when the dull roll of a drum was heard along the line, and the deep-voiced command from regiment to regiment ran, "Alle nieder zum Gebet," and, at the word, every weapon was lowered, and every head drooped forward in prayer! Not a sound, not a whisper was heard in that mighty host, till, after the expiration of some minutes, the command once more summoned them to arms. Then came the word "March," and with a cheer that made the very air vibrate, the troops set out for "Italy."

CHAPTER XI.

"THE MARCH."

any enthusiasm like that of a young soldier setting forth on
mpaign? High in heart and hope, what can equal the glo-
ires his fancy draws of fame and honour? Where will his
n stop in creating scenes of heroic daring or deeds of noble
In such a mood Frank Dalton rode along amongst his com-
whom at once he became the greatest favourite. Explain it
ill, or give up the problem in despair, but there is no denying
he Irish character has more of high spirits, more buoyancy,
of any continental people. Deriving pleasure or amusement
nts that others accept as commonplace, making even the rubs
ns of life subservient to his playful humour, the Irishman has
of ready wit and brilliant fancy you may seek for in vain
ermans, or Italians, or even Frenchmen.
ntrarieties of nature, the contradictions of character, that
ticians and drive political economists half crazy, are delightful
of social intercourse; and what makes the "Nation" ungo-
very frequently renders the "Individual" the most easy-
and manageable man of his set. What a boon was it, then,
omy, thoughtful Bohemian, to the dreamy German, or the
ionate nature of the wild Hungarian, to chance upon one who
of mind to suit them all, and stores of amusing thought that
em possessed. Frank was the delight of the regiment; and
rode in the front or in the rear, a group was certain to be
ound him, listening with eagerness to his stories, or enjoying
drollery which every passing object or event was sure to

ng at a bound from the petty annoyances and vexatious cares
ble position, with all its harassing of debt and poverty, the boy
wild with delight at his newly-won freedom. A thorough
he forgot every strait and difficulty he had passed through,
ht only of the present, or so much of the future as his hopes
d. Kate's generosity, too, made him feel rich, and he was not
to be thought so. That passion for ascendency, that over-
to make a fair figure before the world, no matter at what ma-
fice, or at what heavy cost, was bred "in his very bone;" but

so inveterately Irish is it, that if the nation should ever be visited with the income-tax, there is not a man in the land who will not over-estimate his means, for the sake of the boast to the collector!

A wealthy comrade, if he be but free-handed, is sure to be popular on a march. The fastidiousness that would stand aloof from more formal attentions, gives way here to the chances of the road; and civilities that would elsewhere imply obligation, are now the mere accidents of the way.

To the honour of the Austrian service be it said, "Tuft-hunting" is not to be found there. The officers of a regiment embrace representatives of every class of the Empire, from the haughtiest names of Europe down to the sons of the humblest peasant; and yet the "Camaradeis" is perfect. Very probably there is nothing more contributes to this than the absence of all secrecy as to each man's resources. The Prince is known to be rich; the son of the little Burgher, or Amtmann, is equally known to be poor. Nothing is expected from any above his means, and no disgrace attaches to narrow fortune. If, therefore, Frank was not surrounded by shrewd-witted adventurers, eager to make the most of his extravagance, he was not the less exposed to the flattering acknowledgments his generous habits evoked, and the vanity that comes of being distinguished amongst one's fellows. To be sure, this was his Father's failing, and his Grandfather's before him! Frank, then, entertained all the officers of his squadron on the march, practising a hundred little devices and surprises for them. Now, it was a cold luncheon, laid out in a wood at noonday; now, it was a smoking supper in a village, where even the Generals were fain to munch "Commissary rations." Even the soldiers of his "Zug" participated in this liberality, and many a flask of wine was pledged to the health of the young Lieutenant. As if to make him perfectly happy, the old Count, his uncle, was obliged to hurry forward, and thus Frank was relieved from the constraint of the only one whose presence could have imposed reserve.

It was in the boundless freedom of this liberty, unchecked by prudence, unrestrained by fear of consequences, Frank's lavish nature knew no bounds. He wrote to Vienna for horses of high price; he ordered carriages and liveries to be sent after him. The very surprise his extravagance excited was as incense that he gloried in. How many a generous nature has been wrecked by stupid admiration! How many a true heart been corrupted by the vulgarity of notoriety!

What will the Dalton do next?—what has the fellow in his head now? were surmises that he never heard without delight, and stimulated him to new efforts to create astonishment. Ireland, too, so remote from all their knowledge—that far-away island—furnished many a theme for

wonder, and he repeated, with ecstasy, several of his Father's stories of their former greatness and the barbaric splendour in which they lived. How easy is self-deception, and what a strange cheat is that, a man can practise on himself; but so was it; he actually forgot the long years of their obscure poverty, all their hard trials and distresses, the penury of their daily life—everything!—and could only think of Kate in all her splendour, and himself in every indulgence of his fancy. And yet he loved his Father and Nelly, too,—loved them both dearly. He would have given worlds that the old man could have seen him as he rode at the head of his men. He often felt his eyes grow dim as he fancied the burst of delight it would have caused him. And poor Nelly! how he pictured her features glowing with admiration, and yet trembling from agitation, for he thought of all her warnings.

It is a singular fact, that in the short interval before the tremendous events of the last great European convulsion, the aristocratic influence seemed at its very highest point. Never in each state of the Continent were the claims of family more regarded, nor the sway of proud names more submissively recognised. Like the fever-flush before death, it deceived many who beheld it! In the eyes of his astonished comrades, young Dalton perfectly represented this character. Rich, well-born, brave, and eccentric, his seemed indeed an enviable lot in life. Happy for him if the deception had stopped short with them! Unluckily, however, it extended to himself, and he at last believed every fiction that his own brain suggested.

In this wild delirium of the day-dream he rode along through the deep glens and valleys of the Tyrol, along the banks of the rapid "Inn," through the glorious vale of Meran, and at last gained the great road which, through Trent and Rovoredo, debouches on the Lago di Guarda. Here a despatch from Vienna overtook them, with orders that a small party should be sent off under some officer of intelligence to examine the condition of the Stelvio pass, the highest of all the Alpine roads of Europe, and which, crossing from the South Tyrol, descends directly into Italy by the Lake of Como.

Although it was still early, fresh snows were said to have fallen on that elevated road, and it was an important question whether it were longer practicable for the transit of artillery. Frank was delighted to be selected for this duty,—a separate command, no matter how small or insignificant, had something adventurous and independent about it that pleased him. There was a dash of peril, too, in the enterprise, for already the Valteline and the Brianza were said to be overrun by bands of patriot troops, raising contributions for the war, and compelling others to take up arms.

Frank's instructions were, however, to examine and report upon the road, and, avoiding all possible collision with the enemy, either to unite with any Austrian brigade he could reach, or, if compelled, to retire upon the Tyrol. Some of his comrades pitied him for being selected for this lonely duty, others envied; but all regretted his departure, and with many a warm wish for a speedy meeting, and many a pledge of affection, they saw him depart on his enterprise.

In the small "Zug" of twenty men under his command, there was a young Hungarian Cadet, who, although of good family and birth, Frank remarked never to have seen by any chance in society with the officers. Ravitzky was a handsome, daring-looking fellow, with that expression of mingled sadness and intrepidity in his face so peculiarly Hungarian. He was the best horseman in the regiment, and a thorough soldier in his look and carriage. It had often puzzled Frank why a youth with such advantages had not been promoted. On the one or two occasions, however, on which he asked the question, he had received evasive or awkward replies, and saw that the inquiry was at the least an unpleasant theme among his comrades.

Frank Dalton was well pleased at the opportunity now offered to know something more of this young soldier, almost the only one under his command who could speak any other language than Hungarian. Ravitzky, however, although perfectly respectful in his manner, was cold and reserved, showing no desire for an intimacy at which he might be supposed to have felt proud. Without actually repelling, he seemed determined to avoid nearer acquaintanceship, and appeared always happier when he "fell back," to exchange a few guttural words with his comrades, than when called to "the front," to converse with his officer.

Frank was piqued at all this; he saw that neither his rank, his supposed wealth, nor his assumed position, imposed upon the Cadet; and yet these were the very claims all his brother-officers had acknowledged. Amazed at this wound to his self-love, he affected to forget him altogether, or only remember him as one of the soldiers in his command. So far from seeming displeased, Ravitzky appeared more at his ease than before, and as if relieved from the worry of attentions that were distasteful to him. This conduct completed the measure of Frank's indignation, and he now began actually to hate the youth, on whom he practised all the possible tyrannies of military discipline. These Ravitzky bore without seeming to be aware of them, discharging every duty with an exactitude that made punishment or even reproof impossible.

It is likely that if Frank had not been corrupted by all the adulation he had so lately received—if his self-esteem had not been stimulated into an absurd and overweening vanity, that he would have read this

youth's character aright, and have seen in him that very spirit of independence which once he himself sought to display, albeit by a very different road! Now, however, he received everything in a false light. The reserve was insolence, the coldness was disrespect, the punctuality in duty, a kind of defiance to him. How often he wished that he had never taken him; the very sight of him was now odious to his eyes.

Austrian troops enjoy so much of freedom on a march, that it is difficult often for the most exacting Martinet to seize opportunities for the small tyrannies of discipline. Frank's ingenuity was now to be tried in this way, and, it is but fair to confess, not unsuccessfully. He compelled the men to appear each morning as smart as if on parade—their carbines in the bandoleers, and not slung at the saddle—he inspected every belt, and strap, and buckle, and visited even the slightest infraction with a punishment. Ravitzky accepted all this as the ordinary routine of discipline, and never, even by a look, appeared to resent it. Tyranny would seem to be one of the most insidious of all passions, and, if indulged in little things, invariably goes on extending its influences to greater ones.

At Maltz, a new occasion arose for the tormenting influence of this power, as the military post brought several letters from Vienna—one of which was addressed to the Cadet Ravitzky. It was about a week before, Frank was indignantly complaining to his sister of the shameless violation of all feeling exhibited in opening and reading every soldier's letter. He was eloquently warm in defending such humble rights, and declaimed on the subject with all the impassioned fervour of an injured man; and yet so corrupting is power, so subtle are the arguments by which one establishes differences and distinctions, that now he himself saw nothing strange nor severe in exercising this harsh rule towards another.

He was out of temper, too, that morning. The trim and orderly appearance of the men gave no opportunity of a grumble, and he strutted along on foot in front of his party, only anxious for something to catch at. On turning suddenly around, he saw Ravitzky with his open letter before him, reading. This was a slight breach of discipline on a march where infractions far greater are every day permitted; but it offered another means of persecution, and he called the Cadet imperiously "To the front."

"Are you aware, Cadet," said he, "of the general order regarding the letters of all who serve in the ranks?"

"I am, Herr Lieutenant," said the other, flushing deeply as he saluted him.

"Then you knew that you were committing a breach of discipline in opening that letter?"

"As the letter is written in Hungarian, Herr Lieutenant, I felt that to show it to you could be but a ceremony."

"This explanation may satisfy you, Sir; it does not suffice for me. Hand me your letter."

Ravitzky grew scarlet at this command, and for an instant he seemed as though about to dispute it; but duty overcame every personal impulse, and he gave it.

"I see my own name here!" cried Frank, as the one word legible to his eyes caught him. "How is this?"

Ravitzky grew red and pale in a second, and then stood like one balancing a difficulty in his own mind.

"I ask again, how comes a mention of me in this document?" cried Frank, angrily.

"The letter, Herr Lieutenant, is from my cousin, who, aware that I was serving in the same troop with you, offered to make me known to you."

"And who is this cousin with whom I am so intimate?" said Frank, proudly.

"Count Ernest Walstein," said the other, calmly.

"What, is he your cousin? Are you really related to Walstein?"

The other bowed slightly in assent.

"Then how is it, with such family influence, that you remain a Cadet? You have been two years in the service?"

"Nearly four years, Herr Lieutenant," was the quiet reply.

"Well, four years, and still unpromoted; how is that?"

Ravitzky looked as if unable to answer the question, and seemed confused and uneasy.

"You have always been a good soldier. I see it in your 'character roll;' there is not one punishment recorded against you."

"Not one!" said the Cadet, haughtily.

"There must, then, be some graver reason for passing you over?"

"There may be," said the other, with a careless pride in his manner.

"Which you know?" said Frank, interrogatively.

"Which I guess at," said Ravitzky.

"Here is your letter, Cadet," said Frank, handing it back to him. "I see you will not make a confidant of me, and I will not force a confession."

Ravitzky took the letter, and, saluting with respect, was about to fall back, when Frank said:

"I wish you would be frank with me, and explain this mystery."

"You call it mystery, Sir?" said the other, in astonishment. "You are an Irishman born, and call this a mystery?"

"And why not. What has my birth to do with it?"

"Simply that it might have taught the explanation. Is it truth, or am I deceived in believing that your nation is neither well received nor kindly met by the prouder country with which you are united; and that, even when you stoop to blush at your nationality, you are never recognised as claimant for either office or advancement?"

"This may have been the case once to some extent," said Frank, doubtingly, "but I scarcely think such differences exist now."

"Then you are more fortunate than us," said Ravitzky.

"But I see men of your nation the very highest in military rank—the very nearest to the Sovereign?"

"There's be the shame, then," said Ravitzky. "There are false hearts in every land."

"This is a puzzle to me I cannot comprehend."

"I'll tell you how to understand it all, and easily too, Herr Lieutenant. Take this letter and forward it to the Council of War; declare that Cadet Ravitzky acknowledged to yourself that he was a Hungarian, heart and soul, and, save the eagle on his shako, had nothing of Austria about him. Add, that a hundred thousand of his countrymen are ready to assert the same; and see if they will not make *you* an Ober-Lieutenant, and send me to Moncacs for life." He held out the letter as he spoke for Frank to take, and looked as proudly defiant as if daring him to the act.

"You cannot suppose I would do this?"

"And yet it is exactly your duty, and what you took a solemn oath to perform not a week back."

"And if there be such disaffection in the troops, how will they behave before an enemy?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"As they have always done—aye, even in this very campaign that now threatens us, where men are about to strike a blow for liberty, you'll see our fellows as foremost in the charge as though the cause at stake was not their own."

"Ravitzky, I wish you had told me nothing of all this."

"And yet you forced the confession from me. I told Walstein, over and over, that you were not suited for our plans. You rich men have too much to lose to venture on so bold a game; he, thought otherwise, and all because you were an Irishman!"

"But I have scarcely ever seen Ireland. I know nothing of its grievances or wrongs."

"I believe they are like our own," said Ravitzky. "They tell me

that your people, like ours, are warm, passionate, and impatient; generous in their attachments, and terrible in their hatred. If it be so, and if England be like Austria, there will be the same game to play out there as here."

Frank grew thoughtful at these words; he recalled all that the Abbé D'Esmonde had said to him about the rights of a free people, and the duties of citizenship, and canvassed within his own mind the devoirs of his position; meanwhile Ravitzky had fallen back to the men and taken his place in the ranks.

"They'll not compromise me before an enemy," thought Frank; "that, I may rely on." And with this trustful assurance he mounted and rode slowly forward, deeply sunk in thought, and far less pleasantly than was his wont to be. From all the excitement of his late life, with its flatteries and fascinations, he now fell into a thoughtful mood, the deeper that it was so strongly in contrast to what preceded it. The greater interests that now flashed across his mind made him feel the frivolity of the part he had hitherto played. "Ravitzky is not older than I am, and yet how differently does *he* speculate on the future! *His* ambitions are above the narrow limits of selfish advancement! and the glory *he* aims at is not a mere personal distinction."

This was a dangerous theme, and the longer he dwelled upon it, the more perilous did it become.

The snow lay in deep drifts in many parts of the mountain, and the progress of the little party became daily slower as they ascended. Frequently they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses for miles, and at these times Frank and Ravitzky were always together. It was intimacy without any feeling of attachment on either side, and yet they were drawn towards each other by some strange mysterious sympathy. Their conversation ranged over every topic, from the great events which menaced Europe to the smallest circumstances of personal history; and in all Frank found the Cadet his superior. It was not alone that his views were higher, more disinterested, and less selfish, but his judgments were calmer and better weighed.

"*You* want to be a Count of the Empire, and a grand cross of every order of Europe," said Ravitzky, one day to Frank at the close of a rather warm discussion. "*I* want to see my country free, and live an humble soldier in the ranks." This bold avowal seemed to separate them still more widely, and it was plain that each regarded the other with distrust and reserve. It was after some days of this distance that Frank endeavoured to restore their intimacy by leading Ravitzky to speak of himself, and at last ventured to ask him how it came that he still remained a Cadet, while others, in every way inferior to him, were made officers.

"I have refused promotion some half-dozen times over," said the other. "As a Kaiser Cadet, my time of service will expire in a few months hence; then, I shall be free to leave the service. Were I to accept my grade as an officer, I should have to take an oath of fidelity to the Emperor, which I would not, and pledge myself to a course that I could not do."

"Then they probably know the reasons for which you have declined promotion?"

"Assuredly they can guess them," was the curt reply.

"You are a strange fellow, Ravitzky, and I scarcely understand you."

"And yet there is nothing less a mystery than my conduct or my motives," rejoined he, proudly. "My father is a Noble high in the service and confidence of the Emperor, and although a Magyar by birth, is Austrian by choice and predilection. My sympathies are with my countrymen. In obedience to his wishes, I have entered this service; in justice to myself, I mean to quit it when I can with honour."

"And for what, or where?" asked Frank.

"Who knows?" said he, sorrowfully. "Many of our nation have gone over the seas in search of a new land. Already we are almost as destitute of a home as the Poles. But why talk of these things, Herr Lieutenant? I may be led to say that which it would be your duty to report—you ought, perhaps as it is, to denounce me. Have no fears; my life would always be spared; my family's fidelity would save *me*. This is one of the glorious privileges of birth," cried he, scornfully. "The 'fusillade' will be the sentence for one of those poor fellows yonder, but you and I are too well-born for justice to reach."

"Assuredly *I'll* not quarrel with the privilege!" said Frank, laughing.

"And yet, if I were as rich and as great as you are," said Ravitzky, "it is exactly what I should do! With your fortune and your rank, you want nothing from King or Kaiser. Who, then, would not strive for the higher rewards that only a whole nation can confer?"

Frank blushed deeply at the allusion to his supposed wealth, but had not the courage to refute it. He, however, sought an opportunity to turn the conversation to other channels, and avoided for the future all mention of every theme of politics or party. The mischief, however, was done; he brooded for ever in secret over all the Hungarian had told him; while old memories of fresh wrongs, as narrated by his Father long ago, kept recurring and mingling with them, 'till not only the themes excluded other thoughts, but that he felt the character of his own ambition changing, and new and very different hopes succeeding to his former ones.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE SKIRMISH."

At last they reached the summit of the Stelvio, and began the descent of the mountain; and what a glorious contrast does the southern aspect of an Alpine range present, to the cold barrenness of the north! From the dreary regions of snow, they came at length to small patches of verdure, with here and there a stunted pine-tree. Then the larches appeared, their graceful feathery foliage checkering the sunlight into ten thousand fanciful shapes, while streams and rivulets bubbled and rippled on every side—not ice-bound as before—but careering along in glad liberty, and with the pleasant music of falling water. Lower down, the grass was waving as the wind moved on, and cattle were seen in herds revelling in the generous pasture, or seeking shelter beneath the deep chestnut-trees, for already, even here, the Italian sun was hot. Lower again came dark groves of olives and trellised vines; long aisles of leafy shade traversing the mountain in every direction, now, curving in graceful bends, now, in bold zig-zags, scaling the steep precipices, and sometimes hanging over cliffs and crags, where not even the boldest hand would dare to pluck the ruddy bunches!

Beneath them, as they went, the great plain of Lombardy opened to their view; that glorious expanse of wood and waving corn, with towns and villages dotting the surface; while directly below, at their very feet as it were, stretched the Lake of Como, its wooded banks reflected in the waveless water. What a scene of beauty was that fair Lake, with its leafy promontories, its palaces, and its Alpine background, all basking under the deep blue of an Italian sky; while perfumes of orange groves, of acacias and mangolias, rose like an incense in the air, and floated upwards!

Even the hard nature of the wild Hungarian—the rude dweller beside the dark-rolling Danube or the rapid Theiss—could not survey the scene unmoved; and, dismounting from their saddles, the Hussars moved stealthily along, as if invading the precincts of some charmed region. Frank was in no haste to leave so picturesque a spot, and resolved to halt for the night beneath the shade of some tall chestnut-trees, where they had sought shelter from the noonday sun. Como was at his feet, straight down beneath him was the wooded promontory of Bellagio, and in the

distance rose the Swiss Alps, now tinged with the violet hue of sunset. Never was there a scene less likely to suggest thoughts of war or conflict. If the eye turned from the dark woods of the Brianza to the calm surface of the Lake, everything wore the same aspect of peaceful security. Figures could be seen seated or walking on the terraces of the villas; gorgeously decked gondolas stole over the bay, their gold-embroidered ensigns trailing lazily in the water. Equipages and troops of horsemen wound their way along the leafy lanes; nor a sight nor sound that did not portend ease and enjoyment.

With all Frank's ardour for adventure, he was not sorry at all this. His orders to fall back, in case he saw signs of a formidable movement, were too peremptory to be disobeyed, and he would have turned away with great reluctance from a picture so temptingly inviting. Now, there was no need to think of this. The great dome of the Milan Cathedral showed on the horizon that he was not thirty miles from the Austrian head-quarters, while all around and about him vouched for perfect quiet and tranquillity.

Tempted by a bright moonlight, and the delicious freshness of the night, he determined to push on as far as Lecco, where he could halt for the day, and by another night march reach Milan. Descending slowly, they gained the plain before midnight, and now found themselves on that narrow strip of road, which, escarped from the rock, tracks the margin of the Lake for miles. Here, Frank learned from a peasant that Lecco was much too distant to reach before daybreak, and determined to halt at Varenna, only a few miles off.

This man was the only one they had come up with for several hours, and both Frank and Ravitzky remarked the alarm and terror he exhibited, as he suddenly found himself in the midst of them.

"Our cloth here," said the Cadet, bitterly, "is so allied to thoughts of tyranny and cruelty, one is not to wonder at the terror of that poor peasant."

"He said Varenna was about five miles off," said Frank, who did not like the spirit of the last remark, and wished to change the topic.

"Scarcely so much; but that as the road was newly mended, we should be obliged to walk our cattle."

"Did you remark the fellow, while we were talking, how his eye wandered over our party? I could almost swear that I saw him counting our numbers."

"I did not notice that," said the Cadet, with an almost sneering tone. "I saw that the poor fellow looked stealthily about from side to side, and seemed most impatient to be off."

"And when he did go," cried Frank, "I could not see what way he

took. His 'Felice notte, Signori,' was scarce uttered when he disappeared."

"He took us for a patrol," remarked the other, carelessly; and whether it was this tone, or that Frank was piqued at the assumed coolness of the Cadet, he made no further remark, but rode on to the front of the party. Shortly after this the moon disappeared, and as the road occasionally passed through long tunnellings in the rock, the way became totally obscured, so that in places they were obliged to leave the horses entirely to their own guidance.

"There's Varenna at last!" said Frank, pointing out some lights, which, glittering afar off, were reflected in long columns in the water.

"That may still be a couple of miles off," said Ravitzky, "for the shores of the Lake wind greatly hereabouts. But there! did you not see a light yonder?—*that*, may be the village." But as he spoke the light was gone, and although they continued to look towards the spot for several minutes, it never reappeared.

"They fish by torchlight here," said Ravitzky, "and that may have been the light; and, by the way, there goes a skiff over the water at a furious rate!—hear how the fellows ply their oars."

The dark object which now skimmed the waters must have been close under the rocks while they were speaking, for she suddenly shot out, and in a few minutes was lost to view.

"Apparently the clink of our sabres has frightened those fellows too," said Frank, laughing, "for they pull like men in haste."

"It's well if it be no worse," said the Cadet.

"Partly what I was thinking myself," said Frank. "We may as well be cautious here." And he ordered Ravitzky with two men to ride forty paces in advance, while four others, with carbines cocked, were to drop a similar distance to the rear.

The consciousness that he was assuming a responsibility made Frank feel anxious and excited, and at the same time he was not without the irritating sense that attaches to preparations of needless precaution. From this, however, he was rallied by remarking that Ravitzky seemed more grave and watchful than usual, carefully examining the road as he went along, and halting his party at the slightest noise.

"Did you hear or see anything in front?" asked Frank, as he rode up beside them.

"I have just perceived," said the Cadet, "that the boat which half an hour ago shot ahead and left us, has now returned, and persists in keeping a little in advance of us. There! you can see her yonder. They make no noise with their oars, but are evidently bent on watching our movements."

"We'll soon see if that be their 'tactic,'" said Frank; and gave the word to his men "To trot."

For about half a mile the little party rode sharply forwards, the very pace and the merry clink of the accoutrements seeming to shake off that suspectful anxiety a slower advance suggests. The men were now ordered to walk their horses; and just as they obeyed the word, Ravitzky called out, "See! there she is again. The winding of the bay has given them the advantage of us, and there they are still in front!"

"After all," rejoined Frank, "it may be mere curiosity. Cavalry, I suppose, are seldom seen in these parts."

"So much the better," said Ravitzky, "for there is no ground for them to manœuvre, with a mountain on one hand and a lake on the other. There! did you see that light? It was a signal of some kind. It was shown twice; and mark, now! it is acknowledged yonder."

"And where is the boat?"

"Gone."

"Let us push on to Varenna; there must be some open ground near the village!" cried Frank. "Trot!"

An older soldier than Frank might have felt some anxiety at the position of a party so utterly defenceless if attacked; perhaps, indeed, his inexperience was not his worst ally at this moment, and he rode on boldly, only eager to know what and where was the peril he was called on to confront. Suddenly Ravitzky halted, and called out:

"There's a tree across the road."

Frank rode up, and perceived that a young larch-tree had been placed across the way, half carelessly as it seemed, and without any object of determined opposition.

Two men dismounted by his orders to remove it, and in doing so, discovered that a number of poles and branches were concealed beside the rocks, where they lay evidently ready for use.

"They've had a Tyroler at work here," cried an old Corporal of the Hussars; "they mean to stop us higher up the road, and if we fall back we'll find a barricade here in our rear."

"Over with them into the Lake," said Frank, "and then forward at once."

Both orders were speedily obeyed, and the party now advanced at a rapid trot.

They were close to Varenna, and at a spot where the road is closely hemmed in by rocks on either side, when the sharp bang of a rifle was heard, and a shrill cry shouted something from the hill-side, and was answered from the Lake. Ravitzky had but time to give the word "Forwards!" when a tremendous fire opened from the vineyards, the road-side,

and the boat. The red flashes showed a numerous enemy; but, except these, nothing was to be seen. "Forwards, and reserve your fire, men!" he cried. And they dashed on; but a few paces more found them breasted against a strong barricade of timber and country carts, piled up across the way; a little distance behind which rose another barricade; and here the enemy was thickly posted, as the shattering volley soon proved.

As Frank stood irresolute what course to take, the Corporal, who commanded the rear, galloped up to say that all retreat was cut off in that direction, two heavy waggons being thrown across the road, and crowds of people occupying every spot to fire from.

"Dismount, and storm the barricade!" cried Frank; and, setting the example, he sprang from his saddle, and rushed forwards.

There is no peril a Hungarian will not dare if his officer but lead the way; and now, in face of a tremendous fire at pistol-range, they clambered up the steep sides, while the balls were rattling like hail around them.

The Italians, evidently unprepared for this attack, poured in a volley and fled to the cliffs above the road. Advancing to the second barricade, Frank quickly gained the top, and sprang down into the road. Ravitzky, who was ever close beside him, had scarcely gained the height, when, struck in the shoulder by a ball, he dropped heavily down upon the ground. The attack had now begun from front, flanks, and rear together, and a deadly fire poured down upon the Hussars without ceasing, while all attempt at defence was hopeless.

"Open a pass through the barricade," shouted Frank, "and bring up the horses!" And while some hastened to obey the order, a few others grouped themselves around Ravitzky, and tried to shelter him as he lay.

"Don't leave me to these fellows, Dalton," cried he, passionately; "heave me over into the Lake rather."

Frank now saw that the poor fellow's cheek was torn with a shot, and that his left hand was also shattered.

"The fire is too heavy," Herr Lieutenant; "the men cannot open a way for the cattle," whispered the old Corporal.

"What's to be done, then?" asked Frank; but the poor Corporal fell dead at his side as he spoke. The brunt of the conflict was, however, at the barricades; for, despairing of any prospect of removing the obstacles, many of the Hussars had ridden recklessly at them, and there, entangled or falling, were shot down remorselessly by the enemy. One alone forced his way, and, with his uniform bloody and in rags, dashed up to Frank.

"Get the Cadet up in front of you," whispered Frank; and Ravitzky, who was now unconscious, was lifted into the saddle; while the Hussar, grasping him with his strong arms, held him against his chest.

"Forward, now," said Frank; "on, to the first village, and see him cared for."

"But you, Herr Lieutenant—what's to become of you?"

"I'll not leave my poor wounded comrades."

"There's not a living man amongst them," cried the Hussar. "Come along with us, Herr Lieutenant; we may want your help, too."

The firing ceased at this moment; and to the wild shouts and din of conflict there succeeded a dead silence.

"Keep quiet—keep quiet—stand close beneath the rock," whispered Frank; "here comes the boat." And, with slow and measured stroke, the skiff neared the shore, about twenty paces from where they stood.

"Pull in boldly," cried a gruff voice, in Italian; "there's nothing to fear now: neither man nor horse could survive that fire."

"Would that the great struggle could be accomplished so easily!" said a softer tone, which Frank almost fancied he had heard before.

Lanterns were now seen moving in the space between the barricades; and crowds pressed down to examine and pillage the dead.

"Have you found the officer's body?" asked he of the soft voice.

"I suspect the party was under a Sergeant's command," said another.

"No, no," rejoined the former; "Giuseppe was positive that he saw an officer."

"See that he has not escaped, then," said the other, eagerly. "The tale of this night's adventure might be told in two ways at Milan."

"The Cadet is dying, Sir; his head has fallen back," whispered the Hussar to Frank.

"The Lake, Dalton, the Lake!" muttered the dying man, as he threw his arms around Frank's neck. Frank caught him while he was falling, but, overborne by the weight, reeled back against the rock.

"How many are in the boat?" whispered Frank.

"I see but one man, Sir," said the Hussar.

"Now for it, then," said Frank; "place him between us on a carbine, and make for the boat."

With the energy of a newly-inspired hope, the man obeyed in an instant; and, carrying their wounded comrade, moved stealthily along beneath the shadow of the rock. It was only as they emerged from this, and gained the little gravelly beach, that their figures could be seen.

"Be quiet now, men, and leave that fellow to me," said Frank, as he cocked his pistol. The clank of the sabres, however, seemed warning enough for the crafty Italian, who jumped at once into the Lake. With a rush, the Hungarian sprang into the skiff, while Frank, seizing

it by the prow, pushed boldly out. The plunge and the splash had, meanwhile, attracted notice, and several hurried down to the beach. Frank had but time to order his men to lie down, when a crashing volley flew over them. "Now, to your oars, boys, before they can load again." The light skiff almost rose out of the water to their vigorous stroke; and although the balls tore incessantly amongst them, they continued to row on. Sheets of bright flame flashed across the water, as volley after volley followed; but the Hungarians were soon out of the reach of the fire, with no other loss than some slight wounds.

At first it seemed as if some pursuit were intended; but this was soon abandoned, and the noise of horses and wheels on the road showed that the multitude was departing landwise. Frank now bethought him what was best to be done. If the country was really in open revolt, the only chance of safety lay in surrendering to something like authority; if this were a mere partial outbreak, in all likelihood the opposite shores of the Lake would offer a refuge. A single light, like a star, shone in the far distance, and thither Frank now steered the boat. Ravitzky lay against his knees, his head on Frank's lap, breathing heavily, and occasionally muttering to himself, while the men kept time to the oars with a low, mournful chant, which sounded at least like a death-wail over their comrade.

The Lake, opposite Varenna, is nearly at its widest part; and it was full three hours after the occurrence of the skirmish that they drew near to the light, which they now saw proceeded from a little boat-house, belonging to a villa a short distance from shore. A small harbour, with several boats at anchor in it, opened on the water's edge, and a great flight of marble steps led up to a terraced garden, adorned with fountains and groups of statuary.

Frank saw at once that he had invaded the precincts of one of those princely villas which the Milanese nobility possess on the Lake, and was uncertain which course to take. His Austrian uniform, he well knew, would prove a sorry recommendation to their kind offices. For some time back the breach between the Austrians and the Lombards had gone on widening, till at length every intercourse had ceased between them; and even the public places resorted to by the one, were sure to be avoided on that account by the other. Scarcely a day passed without Milan witnessing some passages of hostility or insolence, and more than one fatal duel showed how far political dislike had descended into personal hatred.

To ask for aid and assistance under circumstances such as these would have been, as Frank felt, a meanness; to demand it as a right would have been as insolent a pretension; and yet what was to be done? Ra-

vitzky's life was in peril; should he, from any scruple whatever, hazard the chances of saving his poor comrade? "Come what may," thought he, "I'll claim their succour—theirs be the shame if they refuse it!"

The approach was longer than he suspected, and, as he went along, Frank had occasion to remark the tasteful elegance of the grounds, and the costly character of all the embellishments. He saw that he was about to present himself before one of the "magnates" of the land, and half-prepared himself for a haughty reception. Crossing a little bridge, he found himself on a grassy plateau, on which a number of windows looked out; and these now all lay open, while, seated within were several persons enjoying the Italian luxury of a "Bel fresco," as the air of the Lake gently stirred the leaves, and carried some faint traces of Alpine freshness into the plains beneath. A large lamp, covered with a deep shade, threw a dubious light through the chamber, and gave to the group all the effect and colouring of a picture.

On an ottoman, supported by pillows, and in an attitude of almost theatrical elegance, lay a lady, dressed in white, a black veil fastened in her hair behind, being half drawn across her face. At her feet sat a young man, with an air of respectful attention; and a little further off, in an easy chair, reclined the massive proportions of a Priest, fanning himself with his skull-cap, and seemingly, gasping for air. Behind all, again, was another figure—a tall man, who, with a cigar in his mouth, slowly paced the chamber up and down, stopping occasionally to hear the conversation, but rarely mingling in it.

There was that air of indolent enjoyment and lassitude, that mingled aspect of splendour and neglect, so characteristically Italian in the scene, that Frank forgot himself, as he stood still and gazed on the group, and even listened to the words.

"After all," said the young man, in Italian, "it is better to let them do the thing in their own way! Cutting off a patrol here, shooting a sentry there, stabbing a General to-day, poisoning a Field-Marshal to-morrow, seems to our notions a very petty war, but it makes a country very untenable in the end!"

"Fuori i barbari! over the Alps with them, at any cost!" growled the Priest.

"I agree with you," said the tall man, stopping to brush the cinder from his cigar, "if you can drive them away in a fair stand-up fight; and I don't see why you could not! Numerically, you are about five hundred to one; physically, you look their equals. You have arms in abundance; you know the country; you have the wishes of the people——"

"The prayers of the Church," interposed the Lady.

"Beati sunt illi qui moriuntur pro patria," [illegible]

"You and I, Father," said the young man, [illegible] fortitude in this world, too."

Frank had now heard more than he had [illegible] his sabre, he suffered it to clink as he [illegible] towards the windows.

"Who have we there?" cried the tall man, advancing [illegible] and challenging the stranger.

Frank replied, in French, that he was an Austrian officer, who had been waylaid near Varenna, and who had made his escape with a wounded comrade and a few others.

"Some shots we heard came from that quarter?" whispered [illegible] the Lady.

She signed to him to be cautious, and the tall man resumed:

"This is a private villa, Sir; and as yet, at least, neither an Austrian barracks nor an hospital."

"When I tell you, Sir," said Frank, with difficulty restraining his passion, "that my comrade is dying, it may, perhaps, excite other feelings than those of national animosity."

"You are a Hungarian?" asked the youth.

"What of that?" broke in the Padre. "Tutti barbari! tutti barbari."

Meanwhile the tall man leaned over where the Lady sat, and conversed eagerly with her.

"You have to think how it will look, and how it will tell abroad," said he, in English. "How shall we persuade the people that we are in their cause, if you make this villa an Austrian refuge?"

She whispered something low in reply, and he rejoined impatiently:

"These are small considerations; and if we are to be always thinking of humanity, let us give up the game at once."

"You'll not refuse my comrade the consolations of his Church, at least?" said Frank. "I see a reverend Father here——"

"And you'll never see him follow you one step out of this chamber," [illegible] the Priest. "Ego autem tanquam surdus, non audiebam," [illegible] he, with a wave of his hand.

"[illegible] be a good Catholic," interposed the youth, half slyly.

"Let them be confounded who seek to do me evil!" said the Priest, [illegible] a solemnity that said how deeply he felt for his own safety.

"This discussion is lasting too long," said Frank, impatiently. "I cannot waive your humanity, but I can demand as a right that a soldier of your Emperor shall receive shelter and succour."

"I said you so," said the tall man, still addressing the Lady in English: "first the entreaty—then the menace."

"And what are we to do," asked she, anxiously.

"Let them occupy the boat-house; there are beds in the lofts. Jekyl will see that they have whatever is necessary; and perhaps by to-morrow we shall get rid of them." Turning towards the youth, he spoke to him for a few minutes rapidly, and the other replied, "You are right. I'll look to it." He arose as he spoke, and bowing politely to Frank, pronounced himself ready to accompany him.

With a few words of apology for his intrusion, as awkwardly uttered as they were ungraciously received, Frank retired from the chamber, to retrace his steps to the harbour.

Little as he was disposed to be communicative, Alfred Jekyl—for it was our old acquaintance—contrived to learn as they went along every circumstance of the late encounter. The pliant Jekyl fully concurred in the indignant epithets of cowards and assassins, bestowed by Frank upon his late assailants; deplored with him the miserable and mistaken policy of revolt among the people; and regretted that, as foreigners themselves, they could not offer the hospitality of the Villa to the wounded man without exposing their lives and fortunes to an infuriated peasantry.

"What nation do you then belong to?" asked Frank, shrewdly conconcealing his knowledge of English.

"We are—so to say—of different countries," said Jekyl, smiling and evading the question. "The Padre is a Florentine——"

"And the Lady?"

"She is a very charming person, and if it were not that she is a little over-devout—a shade too good—would be the most delightful creature in existence."

"The tall man is her husband, I conclude."

"No—not her husband," smiled Jekyl again: "a person you'll like much when you see more of him. Short and abrupt, perhaps, at first, but so kind-hearted, and so generous."

"And has the Villa got a name?" asked Frank, in a voice of some impatience at finding how little his companion repaid his frankness.

"It is called La Rocca," said Jekyl. "Had you not been a stranger in Italy you would scarcely have asked. It is the most celebrated on the whole Lake."

Frank thought he had heard the name before, but when, where, or how, he could not remember. Other cares were, besides, too pressing upon him to make him dwell on the subject, and he willingly addressed himself to the more urgent duties of the moment.

The boat-house stood in no need of all Jekyl's apologies. Frank had lodged in many inferior quarters since he had began soldiering; there were several excellent bedrooms, and a delightful little salon, which

looked directly out upon the Lake. Ravitzky, too, had rallied considerably, and his wounds, although formidable from the loss of blood, showed nothing likely to prove fatal. Jekyl pledged himself to send a surgeon at once to him; and, adding all kinds of civil speeches and offers of personal service, at last left the friends together to exchange confidences.

"What are our hosts like, Dalton?" said the Cadet.

"*You* would call them most patriotic, Ravitzky, for they would scarcely give us shelter. Their only regret seemed that our friends yonder had not done the work better, and finished off the rest of us!"

"It is not pleasant to accept of an ungracious hospitality; but I suppose that I, at least, shall not trouble them long. There's something hot goes on ebbing here that tells of internal bleeding, and if so, a few hours ought to suffice."

Frank did his best to rally his poor comrade; but the task is a difficult one with those whose fear of death is small.

"You'll have to write to Milan, Dalton," said he, suddenly.

"I should rather say, to hasten thither at once," said Frank. "I ought to report myself as soon as possible."

"But you mustn't leave me, Dalton; I cannot part with you. A few hours is not much to you, to me it is a lifelong. I want you also to write to Walstein for me; he'll take care to tell my mother."

Frank knew well the breach of discipline this compliance would entail, and that he could scarcely be guilty of a graver offence against duty; but Ravitzky clung to his wish with such pertinacity, throwing into the entreaty all the eagerness of a last request, that Frank was obliged to promise he would remain, and let the result take what shape it might. While he, therefore, gave orders to his only unwounded comrade to hold himself in readiness to set out for Milan by daybreak, he proceeded to write the brief despatch which was to record his disaster. There are few sadder passages in the life of a young soldier than that in which he has to convey tidings of his own defeat. Want of success is so linked and bound up with want of merit, that every line, every word, seems a self-accusation.

However inevitable a mishap might appear to any witnessing it, a mere reader of the account might suggest fifty expedients to escape it. He knew, besides, the soldierlike contempt entertained in the service for all attacks of undisciplined forces, and how no party, however small, of "regulars" was esteemed insufficient to cope with a mob of peasants or villagers. Any contradiction to so acknowledged a theory would be received with loud reprobation, and, whatever came of it, the most inevitable result would be the professional ruin of him unlucky enough to incur such a failure.

"There's an end of the career of the Lieutenant von Dalton," said Frank, as he concluded the paper. "Neither his uncle, the Field-Marshal, nor his sister, the Princess, will have favour enough to cover delinquency like this." It did, indeed, seem a most humiliating avowal, and probably his own depressed state gave even a sadder colouring to the narrative. He accompanied this despatch by a few lines to the Count, his grand-uncle, which, if apologetic, were manly and straightforward; and, while bearing a high testimony to Ravitzky's conduct, took all the blame of failure to himself alone.

He would gladly have lain down to rest when this last was completed, but the Cadet pressed eagerly for his services, and the letter to Walstein must be written at once.

"The surgeon tells me that there is internal bleeding," said he, "and that, should it return with any degree of violence, all chance of recovery is hopeless. Let us look the danger boldly in the face then, Dalton, and, while I have the time, let me tell Walstein all that I have learned since we parted. The letter I will confide to your safe keeping, till such time as it can be forwarded without risk of discovery."

"Is there necessity for such precaution?" asked Frank.

"Can you ask me the question?"

"Then how am I to write it?" said he.

"Simply from my dictation," replied the other, calmly. "The sentiments will not be yours, but mine. The mere act of the pen, for which these fingers are too weak, can never wound the susceptibility of even *your* loyalty. You are not satisfied with this?"

Frank shook his head dubiously.

Then leave me where I am. I ask no companionship, nor friendship either—or, if you prefer it, hasten to Milan and denounce me as a traitor. My character is well enough known not to need corroboration to your charge; the allegation will never hurt *me*, and it may serve *you*. Aye, Herr Lieutenant, it will prove an opportune escape for the disgrace of this unlucky night. They will forgive you much for such a disclosure."

Frank's temper would have been insufficient to bear such an insult as this, had not the words been spoken by one already excited to the madness of fever, and whose eye now flashed with the wild glare of mania.

It was long before Frank could calm down the passionate excitement of the sick man, and fit him for the task he wished to execute; and even then Ravitzky undertook it in a sullen, resentful spirit, that seemed to say that nothing short of the necessity would have reduced him to such a confidence. Nor was this all. Pain, and nervous irritability together,

made him difficult, and occasionally impossible, to understand. The names of people and places of Hungarian origin Frank in vain endeavoured to spell; the very utmost he could do being to follow the rapid utterance with which the other at times spoke, and impart something like consistency to his wild, unconnected story.

That Ravitzky had been employed in secret communications with some of the Hungarian leaders was plain enough, and that he had held intercourse with many not yet decided how to act, was also apparent. The tangled web of intrigue was, however, too intricate for faculties labouring as his were, and what between his own wanderings and Frank's misconceptions, the document became as mysterious as an oracle. Perhaps Frank was not sorry for this obscurity; or perhaps, like the lady who consoled herself for the indiscretion of keeping a lover's picture by the assurance that "it was not like him," he felt an equal satisfaction in thinking that the subject of his manuscript could never throw any light upon any scheme that ever existed. Now, it ran on about the feelings of the Banat population, and their readiness to take up arms; now, it discussed the fordage of rivers in Transylvania. Here, was an account of the arms in the arsenal of Arad; there, a suggestion how to cut off Nugent's corps on the "Platen See." At times it seemed as if a great "Sclave" revolt were in contemplation; at others, the cause appeared that of the Hungarian nobles alone, anxious to regain all the privileges of the old feudalism. "At all events it is rebellion," thought Frank; and heartily glad was he when the task was completed, and everything save the address appended. It was now sealed, and by Ravitzky's advice deposited within the linings of Frank's pelisse, till such time as a safe opportunity might offer of forwarding it to Walstein.

The task occupied some hours; and when it was completed, so tired was Frank by former exertion and excitement, that he lay down on the floor, and with his head on the sick man's bed fell fast asleep. Such had been his eagerness to finish this lengthy document, that he had never perceived that he was watched as he wrote, and that from the little copse beside the window a man had keenly observed him for several hours long.

Ravitzky, too, fell into a heavy slumber; and now, as both slept, a noiseless foot crossed the floor, and a man in the dark dress of a Priest drew nigh the bedside. Waiting for some seconds as if to assure himself of the soundness of their sleep, he bent down and examined their features. Of the Cadet he took little notice; but when his eyes fell upon Frank's face, pale and exhausted as he lay, he almost started back with astonishment, and for several minutes he seemed as if trying to disabuse himself of an illusion. Even the uniform appeared to surprise him, for he exa-

mined its details with the greatest care. As he stood thus, with the pelisse in his hand, he seemed suddenly to remember the letter he had seen placed within the lining; and then as suddenly drawing out his penknife, he made a small aperture in the seam, and withdrew the paper. He was about to replace the pelisse upon the bed, when, by a second thought as it were, he tore off the envelope of the letter, and re-inserted it within the lining.

A single glance at it appeared to convey the whole tenor of its contents, and his dark eyes ran over the words with eager haste; then, turning away, he moved cautiously from the room. Once in the free air again he re-opened the paper, his sallow features seeming to light up with a kind of passionate lustre as he traced the lines. "It is not—it cannot be without a meaning, that we are thus for ever meeting in life!" cried he; "these are the secrets by which destiny works its purpose, and we blindly call them accident! Even the savage knows better, and deems him an enemy who crosses his path too frequently. Aye, and it will come to this one day," muttered he, slowly; "he or I—he or I." Repeating this over and over, he slowly returned to the Villa.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A VILLA AND ITS COMPANY."

HAVING told our reader that the Villa was called La Rocca, it is perhaps needless that we should say that the Lady was our old friend, Lady Hester, who, under the spiritual guidance of the Canon of the Duomo, was now completing her religious education, while Lord Norwood was fain to escape the importunity of duns and the impertinence of creditors by a few weeks' retirement in this secluded region. Not that this was his only inducement. For some time back he had pressed his claim on various members of his Government for place or employment. He had in vain represented the indignity of a Peer reduced to beggary, or the scarcely better alternative of play for support. He had tried—unsuccessfully, however—every sort of cajolery, menace, and flattery, to obtain something; and, after successively offering his services for or against Carlism in Spain, with Russia or against her in the Caucasus, with twenty minor schemes in Mexico, Sicily, Greece, and Cuba, he at last determined on making Northern Italy the sphere of his abilities, wisely cal-

culating that before the game was played out he should see enough to know what would be the winning side.

An accidental meeting with D'Esmonde, which renewed this old intimacy, had decided him on taking this step. The Abbé had told him that the English Government of the day was secretly favourable to the movement; and although, from the necessities of state policy and the requirements of treaties, unable to afford any open or avowed assistance, would still gladly recognise his participation in the struggle, and, in the event of success, liberally reward him. "A new Kingdom of Upper Italy, with Milan for the capital, and Viscount Norwood the resident Minister Plenipotentiary," there was the whole episode, in three volumes, with its "plot," "catastrophe," and "virtue rewarded," in appropriate fashion; and as times were bad, neither racing nor cards profitable, patriotism was the only unexplored resource he could think of.

Not that my Lord had much faith in the Abbé. Far from it. He thought all priests were knaves; but he also thought "that he'll not cheat *me*. No, no; too wide awake for that. He'll not try that dodge. Knows where I've graduated. Remembers too well what school I come of." He was perfectly candid, too, in this mode of reasoning, calmly telling D'Esmonde his opinions of himself, and frankly showing that any attempt at a "jockey" of him must inevitably fail. The Abbé, to do him justice, took all this candour well—affected to deem it the mere ebullition of honest John Bullism; and so, they were well met. At times, indeed, the Priest's enthusiasm carried him a little away, and he ventured to speculate on the glorious career that conversion would open to the Noble Viscount, and the splendid fruits such a change would be certain to produce. Norwood was, however, too practical for such remote benefits; and, if the Abbé couldn't "make the thing safe," as he styled it, would not listen to this suggestion. A rich Italian Princess—there were two or three such prizes in the wheel—or an Infanta of Spain, might solace many a theological doubt; but Norwood said there was no use in quoting the "Fathers" when he was thinking, only, of the "Daughters."

And the Priest wisely seemed to take him at his word. As for Lady Hester, political intrigue was quite new to her, and consequently very delightful. Since the Cardinal's departure for Rome she had begun to weary somehow of the ordinances of her new faith. The Canonico but ill replaced his Eminence. He had none of that velvety smoothness of manner, that soft and gentle persuasiveness of the dignitary. He could neither smile away a doubt, nor resolve a difficulty by a "bon mot." It is but to say that he was no ascetic, that he loved good cheer and pleasant converse, and was free to let others participate in the enjoy-

ment. Lady Hester was, however, too much habituated to such indulgences to reckon them other than necessaries. D'Esmonde, if he had had time, might have compensated for all these deficiencies, but he was far too deeply engaged with other cares, and his air of grave pre-occupation was more suited to awe her Ladyship than suggest ease in his presence. And now we come to Albert Jekyl—the last member of this incongruous family. Nothing was less to his taste than any fanaticism, whether it took the form of religion or politics. All such extravagances were sure to interfere with society, impede intercourse, and disturb that delightful calm of existence wherein vices ripen, and where men of his stamp gather the harvest.

To overthrow a Government, to disturb the settled foundations of a State, were, to his thinking, a species of "inconvenence" that savoured of intense vulgarity; and he classified such anarchists with men who would like to smash the lamps, tear down the hangings, and destroy the decorations of a salon in which they were asked to pass the evening, preferring to sit down amid ruin and wreck, than to eat their supper at a well-ordered and well-furnished board.

To Jekyl's eyes it was a very nice world as it was, if people would only let it alone! "A world of bright eyes, and soft tresses, and white shoulders, with Donizetti's music and Moet's champagne, was not to be despised, after all." He had no sympathies, therefore, with these disturbers; but he was far too well-bred ever to oppose himself to the wishes of the company, and so he seemed to concur with what he could not prevent. He could have wished that the Italians would take a lesson from the Swiss, who only revolt when there is nothing else to do, and never take to cutting each other's throats, during the season when there are travellers to be cheated; "but, perhaps," said he, "they will soon get enough of it, and learn that their genius lies more in ballets and bon bons, than in bombs and rockets."

Of such various hopes and feelings were the party made up who now awaited D'Esmonde's presence at the supper-table. It was past midnight, and they had been expecting him with impatience for above an hour back. Twice had the Canonico fallen asleep, and started up with terror at what he called a "fantasma di fame." Jekyl had eaten sardines and oysters till he was actually starving. Lady Hester was fidgety and fretful, as waiting always made her; while Norwood walked from the room to the terrace, and out upon the grass to listen, uneasy lest any mischance should have befallen one who was so deeply involved in their confidences.

"It is but three or four-and-twenty miles to Milan," muttered Norwood; "he might easily have been here by this."

"The road is infested with Banditti," growled out the Padre.

"Banditti!" said Norwood, contemptuously. But whether the sneer was intended for the cut-throat's courage, or the folly of men who would expect any booty from a Priest, is hard to say; clearly the Padre took it in the latter sense, for he rejoined,

"Even so, Mi-lordo. When I was Curé of Bergamo they stopped me one night on the Lecco road. A Bishop was on a visit with me, and I had gone up to Milan to procure some fish for our Friday's dinner. Oime! what a turbot it was, and how deliciously it looked at the bottom of the calasino, with the lobsters keeping guard at either side of it, and a small basket of Genoa oysters—those rock beauties that melt in the mouth like a ripe strawberry! There they were, and I had fallen asleep, and was dreaming pleasantly. I thought I saw St. Cecilia dressing 'filets de sole aux fines herbes,' and that she was asking me for sweet marjoram, when suddenly I felt a sharp stick as it were in my side, and, starting up, I felt the point—the very point, of a thin stiletto between my ribs.

"'Scusi, Padre mio,' said a whining voice; and a great black-bearded rascal touched his cap to me with one hand, while with the other he held the dagger close to my side, a comrade all the time covering me with a blunderbuss on the opposite side of the cart. 'Scusi, Padre mio, but we want your purse!' 'Maladetto sia—' 'Don't curse,' said he, beggingly; 'don't curse, Padre, we shall only have to spend more money in masses; but be quick, out with the "Quattrini."'

"'I have nothing but the Church fund for the poor,' said I, angrily.

"'We are the poor, Holy Father,' whined the rogue.

"'I mean the poor who hate to do evil,' said I.

"'It grieves us to the soul when we are driven to it!' sighed the scoundrel; and he gave me a gentle touch with the point of the stiletto. Dark as it was, I could see the wretch grin as I screamed out.

"'Be quick,' growled out the other, roughly, as he brought the wide mouth of the tromboné close to my face. There was no help for it. I had to give up my little leathern pouch with all my quarter's gatherings. Many a warning did I give the villains of the ill-luck that followed sacrilege—how palsies, and blindness, and lameness came upon the limbs of those who robbed the Church. They went on counting the coins without so much as minding me! At last, when they had fairly divided the booty, the first fellow said, 'One favour more, Holy Father, before we part!'

"'Would you take my coat or my cassock?' said I, indignantly.

"'Heaven forbid it,' said he, piously; 'we want only your blessing, Padre mio!'

"'My blessing on thieves and robbers!'

"'Who need it more, Holy Father?' said he, with another stick of the point; 'who need it more?'

"I screamed aloud, and the wretches this time laughed outright at my misery; meanwhile they both uncovered and knelt down in the road before me. Oime! oime! There was no help for it. I had to descend from the calasino!"

"And did you bless them, Father?" asked Jekyl.

"That did I! for when I tried in the middle of the benediction to slip in a muttering of 'Confundite ipsos qui quærunt animam meam,' the whining rogue popped out his accursed weapon, and cried, 'Take care, Holy Father, we only bargain for the blessing.'"

"They left you the fish, however?" said Norwood.

"Not an oyster!" sighed the Priest. "'You would not have us eat flesh on the fast, Padre mio!'" said the hypocritical knave. "'Poor fellows like us have no dispensation, nor the money to buy it!' And so they packed up everything, and then, helping me to my seat, wished me a pleasant journey, and departed."

"I am curious to know if you really forgave them, Padre?" said Jekyl, with an air of serious inquiry.

"Have I not said so!" rejoined the Priest, testily.

"Why, you tried to insinuate something that surely was not a blessing, Father."

"And if I did, the fellow detected it. Ah, that rogue must have served mass once on a time, or his ears had never been so sharp!"

"Are yours quick enough to say if that be the tramp of a horse?" asked Norwood, as he listened to the sounds.

"Yes, that is a horse," cried Jekyl.

"Now, then, for the soup," exclaimed the Canon. "Ah! yes," added he, with a sigh, as he turned to Lady Hester, "these are the crosses—these are the trials of life: but they are good for us—they are good for us! Poor mortals that we are! Non est sanitas in carne mea. Oime! oime!" And so moralising, he gave her his arm as he re-entered the house. In less than a minute later, D'Esmonde galloped up to the door, and dismounted.

"Has anything occurred?—you are late to-night," asked Norwood, hastily.

"Nothing. The city, however, was in great alarm, and the tocsin was twice sounded in the churches when I left at ten o'clock; the guards were doubled at the gates, and mounted patrols making the rounds in every quarter."

"What was this for?" asked Norwood.

"A mere false alarm—nothing more. The Austrians are harassed beyond measure by these frequent calls to arms; and men grumble that they are mustered twice or thrice during the night without any cause. A petard exploded in the street, or a church bell rung, is sure to call out the whole garrison."

"I begin to suspect that our Italian friends will be satisfied with this, and never go further," said Norwood, contemptuously.

"You are wrong there. It is by the frequency and impunity of these demonstrations, that they are working up courage for an overt movement. By the time that the Austrians have grown indifferent to such nightly disturbances, the others will have gained hardihood for a real outbreak."

"If they only be persuaded that war is assassination on a grand scale, they might make excellent soldiers," simpered Jekyl; but the others seemed to take no heed of his pleasantry.

"Have they not fixed a time," asked Norwood, eagerly, "or is all left vague and uncertain as ever?"

"The Swiss are quite ready. We only wait now for the Piedmontese; Genoa is with us at a word; so are Leghorn and the towns of the Romagna. The signal once given, there will be such a rising as Italy has not seen for centuries. England will supply arms, ammunition——"

"All but men," sighed Norwood; "and it is exactly what are wanting."

"And France——"

"Will give her sympathies," broke in Jekyl. "That dear France! that always says God-speed to disturbance and trouble wherever it be."

"What of that Austrian soldier?" said D'Esmonde, who did not quite like the tone of either of his companions—"is he better?"

"The surgeon says that he cannot recover," replied Jekyl; "and for that reason I suspect that he's in no danger."

"Have you seen the officer to-day?" asked the Priest, again.

"No," replied Norwood. "Jekyl and I twice endeavoured to speak with him; but he slept half the forenoon, and since that has been writing innumerable despatches to head-quarters."

"They say at Milan that he'll be shot for this misadventure," said D'Esmonde; "that he acted in contravention to his orders, or did something, I know not what, which will be treated as a grave military offence."

"The Canonico is furious with us for this delay," said Jekyl, laughing, as he returned from a peep into the salon. The Abbé was, meanwhile, deep in a whispered conversation with Norwood. "Aye," said

the latter, doubtingly, "but it's a serious thing to tamper with a soldier's fidelity. The Austrians are not the people to suffer this with impunity."

"How are they to know it?"

"If it fail—if this young fellow reject our offers, which, as a Hungarian, it is just as likely that he will do?"

"But he is not a Hungarian. I know him, and all about him."

"And can you answer for his readiness to join us?"

"I cannot go that far; but seeing the position he stands in, what can be more probable? And, take the worst case: suppose that he refuses, I have him still!"

"How do you mean?"

"Simply that I have in my hands the means to destroy all his credit, and peril his very life!" The sudden energy of passion in which he delivered these words appeared to have escaped him unawares, for as quickly recovering his wonted smoothness of tone, he said, "Not that anything short of the last necessity would drive me to such an alternative."

"May I never have to trust to your tender mercies, Abbé!" said Norwood, with a laugh, in which there was far more of earnest than of jesting; "but let us talk of these things after supper." And, with the careless ease of a mere idler, he lounged into the house, followed by the others.

Once seated at supper, the conversation took a general turn, requiring all the Abbé's skill and Jekyl's tact at times, to cover from the servants who waited the secret meaning of many of those allusions to politics and party which Lady Hester uttered, in the perfect conviction that she was talking in riddles. Her indiscretion rendered her, indeed, a most perilous associate; and in spite of hints, warnings, and signs, she would rattle on upon the dangerous theme of revolt and insurrection; the poor devices of deception she employed being but sorry blinds to the native quickness of Italian shrewdness.

This little fire of cross-purposes sadly perplexed the Canonico, who looked up now and then from his plate with a face of stupid astonishment at all that went forward.

"You have heard, I suppose, Canon," said the Abbé, adroitly addressing him, "that the City authorities have only granted twelve thousand crowns for the Festival of San Giovanni?"

"Twelve thousand crowns! It will not pay for the throne of the Virgin," growled out the Canon, "not to speak of the twenty-six Angels in sprigged muslin!"

"There are to be no Angels this time. The Priests of the Santa Cross are to walk behind the canopy."

"It will ruin the procession," muttered the Canon.

"They certainly look as little like Angels as need be," interposed Jekyl, slyly.

"Sixty lamps and two hundred tapers are a scant allowance," continued D'Esmonde.

"Darkness—positive darkness!" ejaculated the Canon; "ubi evasit pietas nostra?—what has become of our ancient faith?"

"The soldier, your Reverence, wishes to see you immediately," said a servant, entering in haste; "he fears that he is sinking fast."

"The heavy dews of the morning are falling—can he not wait till the sun rises, Giuseppe?"

"You had better see him at once, Canon," whispered the Abbé.

"Oime! oime!" sighed the Priest, "mine is a weary road—'potum meum cum fletu miscebam,'" added he, finishing off his champagne, "is it far from this?"

"Only to the boat-house, Father," said Lady Hester.

"Per mares et ignos! it's a good half hour's walk," growled he.

"You can have the pony carriage, Father," interposed she.

"He starts at everything by night—don't trust the pony," said Jekyl.

"Well, then, be carried in my chair, Father."

"Be it so—be it so," muttered he. "I yield myself to anything—'sicut passer sub tecto'—I have no will of my own."

"Go along with him, my Lord," whispered D'Esmonde; "the opportunity will be a good one to see the young officer. While the Father talks with the sick man, you can converse with the friend. See in what frame of mind he is."

"Does he speak French? for I am but an indifferent German," said Norwood.

"Yes, French will do," said D'Esmonde, who, after a moment's hesitation as to whether he should reveal the secret of Frank's country, seemed to decide on still reserving the knowledge."

"But this could be better done to-morrow," said Norwood.

"To-morrow will be too late," whispered D'Esmonde. "Go now; you shall know my reasons at your return."

Norwood took little heed of the Canonico's attempts at conversation as they went along. His mind was occupied with other thoughts. The moment of open revolt was drawing nigh, and now came doubts of D'Esmonde's sincerity and good faith. It was true, that many of the

'riests were disposed to the wildest theories of democracy—they were ıen of more than ordinary capacity, with far less than the ordinary ıare of worldly advantages. D'Esmonde, however, was not one of ıese; there was no limit to which his ambition might not reasonably spire—no dignity in his Church above his legitimate hopes. What enefit could accrue to him from a great political convulsion? "He'll ot be nearer to the Popedom when the cannon are shaking the Va-can!" Such were the puzzling considerations that worked within him s he drew near the boat-house.

A figure was seated on the door-sill, with the head buried beneath his ands, but on hearing the approach of the others he quickly arose and rew himself up. "You are too late, Sir," said he, addressing the 'riest, sternly; "my poor comrade is no more!"

"Ah me! and they would drag me out in the chill night air," groaned he Canonico.

The cruelty of that must have weighed heavily on his heart.

Frank turned away, and re-entered the house without speaking, while Norwood followed him in silence. On a low truckle bed lay the dead ıldier, his manly face calm and tranquil as the cold heart within his reast. A weatherbeaten, bronzed soldier sat at the foot of the bed, ıe tears slowly flowing along his cheeks, as his bloodshot eyes were xed upon his comrade. It was the first blood that had been shed in ıe cause of Italian independence, and Norwood stood thoughtfully aring at the victim.

"Poor fellow!" said he; "they who gave his death-wound little knew 'hat sympathy for liberty that jacket covered, nor how truly the Hun ı the brother of the Italian."

"They were assassins and murderers," cried Frank, passionately; fellows who attacked us from behind walls and barricades."

"Your reproach only means that they were not soldiers."

"That they were cowards, rather—rank cowards. The liberty that ıch fellows strive for will be well worthy of them! But no more of ıis," cried he, impatiently; "is there a church near, where I can lay is body—he was a Catholic?"

"There is a chapel attached to the Villa; I will ask permission for 'hat you require."

"You will confer a favour on me," said Frank, "for I am desirous f hastening on to Milan at once."

"You will scarcely find your comrades there," said Norwood.

Frank started with surprise, and the other went on:

"There are rumours of a serious revolt in the City, and some say that he Imperial troops have retired on the Mantua road."

"They know nothing of Austrian soldiers who say these things," said Frank, haughtily; "but there is the more need that I should lose no time here."

"Come, then, I will show you the way to the chapel," said Norwood, who could not divest himself of a feeling of interest for the young soldier.

Frank spoke a few words in Hungarian to his men, and hastily wrapping the dead man in his cloak, they placed him on a door, his shako and his sword at either side of him.

"You will see that he is buried as becomes a brave and a true soldier," said Frank, with a faltering accent, as they went along. "This will defray the cost."

"No, no; there is no need of that," said Norwood, pushing away the proffered purse. "We'll look to it ourselves."

"Let there be some record of him preserved, too, for his friends' sake. His name was 'Stanislas Ravitzky.'"

"And may I ask yours?" said Norwood.

"You'll hear of it in the first Court-martial return for Milan," said Frank, bitterly.

"Then why go there?—why hasten to certain ruin?"

"You would say, why not desert?—why not forfeit my honour and my oath? Because I am a Gentleman, Sir; and if the explanation be not intelligible, so much the worse for you."

"I have left him in the chapel," said Norwood to D'Esmonde, a few minutes after this conversation; "he is kneeling beside the corpse, and praying. There is nothing to be done with him. It is but time lost to attempt it."

"So much the worse for *him*," said D'Esmonde, significantly repeating the words that Norwood related, while he hastily left the spot and walked towards the high-road, where now an Austrian picquet was standing beside the horses.

"This is your warrant, Sir," said D'Esmonde to the Officer, handing him a paper; "you'll find the person you seek for in the chapel yonder."

The Officer saluted in reply, and ordered his men to mount, while D'Esmonde, passing into a thick part of the copse, was out of sight in a moment.

CHAPTER XIV.

PETER DALTON ON POLITICS, LAW, AND SOCIALITIES.

ave seen Baden in the "dark winter of its discontent"—in the me of its promise—and now we come back to it once more, in blaze of its noon-day splendor. It was the height of the And what a world of dissipation does that phrase embody. ckless extravagance—what thoughtless profusion—what sys- vice glossed over by the lacquer of polished breeding—what hich lacks but innocence to be almost divine. All the attrac- a lovely country, all the blandishments of wealth, the aids of d painting, the odour of flowers, the songs of birds—all pressed service of voluptuous dissipation, and made to throw a false er a scene where vice alone predominates!

the camp of pleasure, to which all rallied who loved to fight hat banner. And there they were, a mingled host of Princes, s, and Generals. The spoiled children of fashion, the reckless er, the bankrupt speculator, the flattered beauty in all the pride veliness, the tarnished virtue in all the effrontery of conquest! and incongruous elements of good and evil—of all that is l in heroism, and all that men shrink from with shame—there e met as equals.

by some conventional relaxation of all the habits which rule nen admitted to their intimacies, here, those they would have ly avoided elsewhere. Vice, like poverty, seemed to have anni- ll the distinctions of rank, and the "decorated" Noble and the Felon sat down to the same board like brethren.

all the gay company of the Cursaal none appeared to have a relish for the glittering pleasures of the scene than a large nan, who, in a coat of jockey cut and a showy waistcoat, sat at of one of the tables—a post which the obsequious attention of ers proclaimed to be his own distinctively. Within a kind of ce of bottles and decanters of every shape and size, he looked ius of hospitality and dissipation; and it was only necessary how many a smile was turned on him, how many a soft as directed towards him, to see that he was the centre of all- g flattery. There was a reckless, unsuspecting jollity in his t could not be mistaken; and his loud hearty laugh bespoke the -satisfaction of his nature. Like "special envoys," *his* cham-

pagne bottles were sent hither and thither down the table, and at each instant a friendly nod or a courteous bow acknowledged his hospitable attention. At either side of him were seated a knot of his peculiar parasites, and neither were wit nor beauty wanting to make their society agreeable. There is a species of mock affection—a false air of attachment in the homage rendered to such a man as this, that makes the flattery infinitely more seductive than all the respectful devotion that ever surrounded a monarch. And so our old friend Peter Dalton—need we to name him?—felt it. "Barring the glorious burst of a fox-hunting chorus, or the wild 'hip, hip' of a favourite toast, it was almost as good as Ireland." Indeed, in some respects, it had rather the advantage over the dear island.

Peter was intensely Irish, and had all the native relish for high company, and it was no mean enjoyment that he felt in seeing Royal and Serene Highnesses at every side of him, and knowing that some of the great names of Europe were waiting for the very dish that was served first in honour to himself. There was a glittering splendor, too, in the gorgeously decorated "Saal," with its frescoes, its mirrors, its lustres, and its bouquets, that captivated him. The very associations, which a more refined critic would have cavilled at, had their attractions for *him*, and he gloried in the noise and uproar. The clink of glasses and the crash of plates were to his ears the pleasant harmony of a convivial meeting.

He was in the very height of enjoyment. A few days back he had received a large remittance from Kate. It came in a letter to Nelly, which he had not read, nor cared to read. He only knew that she was at St. Petersburg waiting for Midchikoff's arrival. The money had driven all other thoughts out of his head, and before Nelly had glanced her eye over half the first page, he was already away to negotiate the bills with Abel Kraus, the money-changer. As for Frank, they had not heard of him for several months back. Nelly, indeed, had received a few lines from Count Stephen, but they did not appear to contain anything very interesting, for she went to her room soon after reading them, and Dalton forgot to ask more on the subject. His was not a mind to conjure up possible misfortunes. Always too ready to believe the best, he took the world ever on its sunniest side, and never would acknowledge a calamity while there was a loophole of escape from it.

"Why wouldn't she be happy?—What the devil could ail her? Why oughtn't he to be well?—Wasn't he as strong as a bull, and not twenty yet?" Such were the consolations of his philosophy, and he needed no better.

His flatterers, too, used to insinuate little fragments of news about the "Princess" and the "young Count," as they styled Frank, which he

eagerly devoured, and, as well as his memory served him, tried to repeat to Nelly when he returned home of a night. These were enough for him; and the little sigh with which he tossed off his champagne to their health was the extent of sorrow the separation cost him.

Now and then, it is true, he wished they were with him; he'd have liked to show the foreigners "what an Irish girl was;" he would have been pleased, too, that his handsome boy should have been seen amongst "them grinning baboons, with hair all over them." He desired this the more, that Nelly would never venture into public with him, or, if she did, it was with such evident shame and repugnance, that even his selfishness could not exact the sacrifice. "'Tis, maybe, the sight of the dancing grieves her, and she lame," was the explanation he gave himself of this strange turn of mind; and whenever honest Peter had hit upon what he thought was a reason for anything, he dismissed all further thought about the matter for ever. It was a debt paid, and he felt as if he had had the receipt on his file.

On the day we now speak of he was supremely happy. An Irish Peer had come into the Saal leaning on his arm, and twice called him "Dalton" across the table. The waiter had apologised to a Royal Highness for not having better Johannisberg, as the "Schloss" wine had all been reserved for the "Count," as Peter was styled. He had won four hundred Napoleons at roulette before dinner; and a bracelet, that cost a hundred and twenty, was glittering on a fair wrist beside him, while a murmur of his name, in tones of unquestionable adulation, from all parts of the table, seemed to fill up the measure of his delight.

"What's them places vacant there?" called he out to the waiter, and pointing to five chairs turned back to the table, in token of being reserved.

"It was an English family had arrived that morning who bespoke them."

"Faix! then, they're likely to lose soup and fish," said Peter; "the 'coorses' here wait for no man." And as he spoke the party made their appearance.

A large elderly lady of imposing mien and stately presence led the way, followed by a younger and slighter figure; after whom walked a very feeble old man, of a spare and stooping form; the end being brought up by a little rosy man, with a twinkling eye and a short jerking limp, that made him seem rather to dance than walk forward.

"They've ca—ca—carried off the soup already," cried the last-mentioned personage, as he arranged his napkin before him, "and—and—and I fa—fancy, the fish, too."

"Be quiet, Scroope," called out the fat lady, "do be quiet."

"Yes; but we shall have to p—p—pay all the same," cried Scroope.

"There's good sense in that, any way," broke in Dalton; "will you take a glass of champagne with me, Sir? You'll find it cool, and not bad of its kind."

Mr. Purvis acknowledged the courtesy gracefully, and bowed as he drank.

"Take the ortolans to that lady, Fritz," said Dalton to the waiter; and Mrs. Ricketts smiled her sweetest gratitude.

"We are dreadfully late," sighed she, "but the dear Princess of Stauffenschwillingen passed all the morning with us, and we couldn't get away."

"I thought it was the woman about the ro—rope dancing detained you."

"Hush, Scroope—will you be quiet? Martha, dearest, don't venture on those truffles. My poor child, they would be the death of you." And, so saying, she drew her companion's plate before herself. "A most agreeable, gentlemanlike person," muttered she, in a whisper evidently intended for Peter's ears. "We must find out who he is. I suppose you know the Princess, Sir? Don't you love her?" said she, addressing Dalton.

"Faix! if you mean the old lady covered with snuff that comes here to have her dogs washed at the well, without intending any offence to you, I do not. To tell you the truth, Ma'am, when I was in the habit of fallin' in love, it was a very different kind of a creature that did it! Aye, aye, 'The days is gone when beauty bright, my heart's ease spoilt.'"

"My heart's chain wove," smiled and whispered Mrs. Ricketts.

"Just so. It comes to the same thing. Give me the wine, Fritz. Will you drink a glass with me, Sir?"

The invitation was addressed to General Ricketts, who, by dint of various shoves, pokings, and admonitions, was at last made aware of the proposition.

"Your father's getting a little the worse for wear, Miss," said Dalton to Martha, who blushed at even the small flattery of the observation.

"The General's services have impaired his constitution," remarked Mrs. Ricketts, proudly.

"Aye, and to all appearance it was nothing to boast of in the beginning," replied Peter, as he surveyed with self-satisfaction his only partly form.

"Fourteen years in the Hima—Hima—Hima——"

"Himalaya, Scroope—the Himalaya."

"The highest mountains in the world!" continued Purvis.

"For wet under foot, and a spongy soil that never dries, I'll back the Galtees against them any day. See, now, you can walk from morning to night and be over your head at every step you go."

"Where are they?" inquired Scroope.

"Why, where would they be? In Ireland to be sure; and here's prosperity to her, and bad luck to Process-servers, 'Polis,' and Poor-Law Commissioners!" Dalton drained his glass with solemn energy to his toast, and looked as though his heart was relieved of a weight by this outburst of indignation.

"You Irish are so patriotic!" exclaimed Mrs. Ricketts, enthusiastically.

"I believe we are," replied Dalton. "'Tis only we've an odd way of showing it."

"I remark that they ne—never live in Ireland when they can li—live out of it," cackled Purvis.

"Well, and why not? Is it by staying at home in the one place people learns improvements? You might drink whisky-punch for forty years and never know the taste of champagne. Potatoes wouldn't teach you the flavour of truffles. There's nothing like travellin'!"

"Very true," sighed Mrs. Ricketts; "but, as the Poet says, 'Where'er I go, whatever realms I see——"

"The devil a one you'll meet as poor as Ireland," broke in Dalton, who now had thrown himself headlong into a favourite theme. "Other countries get better, but she gets worse."

"They say it's the Po—Po——" screamed Scroope.

"The Pope, is it?"

"No; the Po—potatoes is the cause of everything."

"They might as well hould their prate, then," broke in Peter, whose dialect always grew broader when he was excited. "Why don't they tell me, that if I was too poor to buy broadcloth, it would be better for me go naked than wear corduroy breeches? Not that I'd mind them, Miss!" said he, turning to Martha, who already was blushing at his illustration.

"I fear that the evil lies deeper," sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"You mean the bogs?" asked Dalton.

"Not exactly, Sir; but I allude to those drearier swamps of superstition and ignorance that overlay the land."

Peter was puzzled, and scratched his ear like a man at a nonplus.

"My sister means the Pr—Pr—Pr——"

"The Process-servers?"

"No; the Pr—Priests—the Priests," screamed Purvis.

"Bother!" exclaimed Dalton, with an accent of ineffable disdain. "'Tis much you know about Ireland!"

"You don't agree with me, then?" sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"Indeed I do not. Would you take away the little bit of education out of a country where there's nothing but ignorance?—would you extinguish the hopes of heaven amongst them that has nothing but starvation and misery here? Try it—just try it. I put humanity out of the question; but just try it, for the safety sake! Pat isn't very orderly now, but, faix! you'd make a raal devil of him then, entirely!"

"But Popery, my dear Sir—the Confessional——"

"Bother!" said Dalton, with a wave of his hand. "How much you know about it! 'Tis just as they used to talk long ago about drunkenness. Sure, I remember well when there was all that hue and cry about Irish Gentlemen's habits of dissipation, and the whole time nobody took anything to hurt his constitution. Well, it's just the same with Confession—everybody uses his discretion about it. *You* have your peccadilloes, and *I* have my peccadilloes, and that young Lady there has her—— Well, I didn't mean to make you blush, Miss, but 'tis what I'm saying, that nobody, barrin' a fool, would be too hard upon himself!"

"So that it ain't Con—Confession at all," exclaimed Purvis.

"Who told you that?" said Peter, sternly. "Is it nothing to pay two-and-sixpence in the pound if you were bankrupt to-morrow? Doesn't it show an honest intention, any way?" said he, with a wink.

"Then what are the evils of Ireland?" asked Mrs. Ricketts, with an air of inquiring interest.

"I'll tell you, then," said Dalton, slowly, as he filled a capacious glass with champagne. "It isn't the Priests, nor it isn't the Potatoes, nor it isn't the Protestants either, though many respectable people think so; for you see we had always Priests and Potatoes, and a sprinkling of Protestants, besides; but the real evil of Ireland—and there's no man living knows it better than I do—is quite another thing, and here's what it is." And he stooped down and dropped his voice to a whisper. "'Tis this: 'Tis paying money when you havn't it!" The grave solemnity of this enunciation did not seem to make it a whit more intelligible to Mrs. Ricketts, who certainly looked the very type of amazement. "That's what it is," reiterated Dalton; "paying money when you havn't it! There's the ruin of Ireland; and, as I said before, who ought to know better? for you see, when you owe money and you havn't it, you must get it how you can. You know what that means? and if you don't, I'll tell you. It means mortgages and bond debts; rack-renting and renewals; breaking up an elegant establishment; selling your horses at Dycer's; going to the devil entirely; and

not only yourself, but all belonging to you. The tradesmen you dealt with; the country shop where you bought everything; the tithes; the Priests' dues—not a farthing left for them."

"But you don't mean to say that people shouldn't p—p—pay their debts?" screamed Purvis.

"There's a time for everything," replied Dalton. "Shaving oneself is a mighty useful process, but you wouldn't have a man get up out of his bed at night to do it? I never was for keeping money—the worst enemy wouldn't say that of me. Spend it freely when you have it; but sure it's not spending, to be paying debts due thirty or forty years back, made by your great Grandfather?"

"One should be just before they were ge—gen—gene—gene——"

"Faix! I'd be both," said Dalton, who with native casuisty only maintained a discussion for the sake of baffling or mystifying an adversary. "I'd be just to myself and generous to my friends, them's my sentiments; and it's Peter Dalton that says it!"

"Dalton!" repeated Mrs. Ricketts, in a low voice—"didn't he say Dalton, Martha?"

"Yes, sister; it was Dalton."

"Didn't you say your name was Da—Da—a—a——"

"No, I didn't!" cried Peter, laughing. "I said Peter Dalton as plain as a man could speak; and if ever you were in Ireland, you may have heard the name before now."

"We knew a young lady of that name at Florence."

"Is it Kate—my daughter Kate?" cried the old man, in ecstasy.

"Yes, she was called Kate," replied Mrs. Ricketts, whose strategic sight foresaw a world of consequences from the recognition. "What a lovely creature she was!"

"And you knew Kate?" cried Dalton again, gazing on the group with intense interest. "But was it my Kate; perhaps it wasn't mine!"

"She was living in the Mazzarini Palace with Lady Hester Onslow."

"That's her—that's her! Oh, tell me everything you know,—tell me all you can think of her. She was the light of my eyes for many a year! Is the old Lady sick?" cried he, suddenly, for Mrs. Ricketts had leaned back in her chair, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

"She's only overcome," said Martha, as she threw back her own shawl and prepared for active service; while Scroope, in a burst of generous anxiety, seized the first decanter near him and filled out a bumper.

"She and your da—daughter were like sisters," whispered Scroope to Dalton.

"The devil they were!" exclaimed Peter, who thought their looks must have belied the relationship. "Isn't she getting worse—she's trembling all over her?"

Mrs. Ricketts' state now warranted the most acute sympathy, for she threw her eyes wildly about, and seemed like one gasping for life.

"Is she here, Martha? Is she near me—can I see her—can I touch her?" cried she, in accents almost heartrending.

"Yes, yes; you shall see her; she'll not leave you," said Martha, as if caressing a child. "We must remove her; we must get her out of this."

"To be sure; yes, of course!" cried Dalton. "There's a room here empty. It's a tender heart she has, any way;" and, so saying, he arose, and with the aid of some half-dozen waiters transported the now unconscious Zoe, chair and all, into a small chamber adjoining the Saal.

"This is her father's hand," murmured Mrs. Ricketts, as she pressed Dalton's in her own—"her father's hand."

"Yes, my dear!" said Dalton, returning the pressure, and feeling a strong desire to blubber, just for sociality sake.

"If you knew how they loved each other," whispered Martha, while she busied herself pinning cap-ribbons out of the way of cold applications, and covering up lace from the damaging influence of restoratives.

"It's wonderful—it's wonderful!" exclaimed Peter, whose faculties were actually confounded by such a rush of sensations and emotions.

"Make him go back to his dinner, Martha; make him go back," sighed the sick Lady, in a half dreamy voice.

"I couldn't eat a bit; a morsel would choke me this minute," said Dalton, who couldn't bear to be outdone in the refinements of excited sensibility.

"She must never be contradicted while in this state," said Martha, confidingly. "All depends on indulgence."

"It's wonderful!" exclaimed Dalton, again—"downright wonderful!"

"Then, pray go back; she'll be quite well presently," rejoined Martha, who already, from the contents of a reticule like a carpet-bag, had metamorphosed the fair Zoe's appearance into all the semblance of a patient.

"It's wonderful; it beats Banagher," muttered Peter, as he returned to the Saal, and resumed his place at the table. The company had already taken their departure, and, except Purvis and the General, only a few stragglers remained behind.

"Does she often get them?" asked Peter of Purvis.

"Only when her fee—fee—feelings are worked upon; she's so se—sensitive!"

"Too tender a heart," sighed Peter, as he filled his glass and sighed over an infirmity that he thought he well knew all the miseries of. "And her name, if I might make bould?"

"Ricketts — Mrs. Montague Ricketts. This is Ge—Ge—General Ricketts." At these words the old man looked up, smiled blandly, and lifted his glass to his lips.

"Your good health, and many happy returns to you," said Peter, in reply to the courtesy. "Ricketts—Ricketts. Well, I'm sure I heard the name before."

"In the D—D—Duke's despatches you may have seen it."

"No, no, no. I never read one of them. I heard it here, in Baden. Wait now, and I'll remember how." Neither the effort at recollection nor the aid of a bumper seemed satisfactory, for Dalton sat musingly for several minutes together. "Well, I thought I knew the name," exclaimed he at last, with a deep sigh of discomfiture; "'tis runnin' in my head yet—something about chilblains—chilblains."

"But the name is R—R—Ricketts," screamed Purvis.

"And so it is," sighed Peter. "My brain is wool-gathering. By my conscience I have it now, though!" cried he, in wild delight. "I knew I'd scent it out. It was one Fogles that was here; a chap with a red wig, and deaf as a door-nail."

"Foglass, you mean?—Fo—Foglass—don't you?"

"I always called him Fogles; and I'm sure it's as good a name as the other, any day."

"He's so pl—pleasant," chimed in Scroope, who, under the influence of Dalton's champagne, was now growing convivial—"he's so agreeable; always in the highest cir—circles, and dining with No—No—No——"

"With Nobs," suggested Peter. "He might do better and he might do worse. I've seen Lords that was as great rapscallions as you'd meet from this to Kilrush."

"But Foglass was always so excl—exclusive, and held himself so high."

"The higher the better," rejoined Dalton, "even if it was out of one's reach altogether; for a more tiresome ould crayture I never forgathered with; and such a bag of stories he had, without a bit of drollery or fun in one of them. You may think that kind of fellow good company in England, but, in my poor country, a red herring and a pint of beer would get you one he couldn't howld a candle to. See now, Mister——"

"P—P—Purvis," screamed the other.

"Mister Purvis—if that's the name—see now, 'tisn't boasting I am, for the condition we're in wouldn't let any man boast—but it's what I'm

saying, the English is a mighty stupid people. They have their London jokes, and, like London porter, mighty heavy they are, and bitter besides. and they have two or three play-actors that makes them die laughing at the same comicalities every day of the year. They get used to them, as they do to the smoke, and the noise, and the Thames water; and nothing would persuade them that, because they're rich, they're not agreeable, and social, and witty. And may I never leave this, but you'd find outer notions of life, droller stories, and more fun, under a dry arch of the Aqueduct of Stoney Batter than if you had the run of Westminster Hall. Look at the shouts of laughing in the Law Coorts; look at the loud laughter in the House of Commons. Oh dear, oh dear, it makes me quite melancholy just to think of it. I won't talk of the Parliament, because it's gone; but take an Irish Coort, in Dublin or on the Assizes, at any trial—murder, if you like—and see the fun that goes on,—the Judge quizzing the Jury, and the Counsel quizzing the Judge, and the Pris'ner quizzing all three. There was poor ould Norbury—rest his soul!—I remember well how he couldn't put on the black cap for laughing."

"And is ju—justice better administered for all that?" cried Purvis.

"To be sure it is. Isn't the laws made to expose villany, and not let people be imposed upon? Sure it's not to hang Paddy Blake you want, but to keep others from following his example. And many's the time in Ireland, when, what between the blunderin' of the Crown Lawyers, the flaws of the indictment, the conscientious scruples of the Jury—you know what that means—and the hurry of the Judge to be away to Harrowgate or Tunbridge—a villain gets off. But instead of going out with an elegant bran new character, a bit of a joke—a droll word spoken during the trial—sticks to him all his life after, till it would be just as well for him to be hanged at once as be laughed at, from Pill Lane to the Lakes of Killarney. Don't I remember well, when one of the Regans—Tim, I think it was—was tried for murder at Tralee; there was a something or other they couldn't convict upon. 'Twas his Grandfather's age was put down wrong, or the colour of his Stepmother's hair; or the nails in his shoes wasn't described right—whatever it was, it was a flaw, as they called it; and a flaw in a brief, like one in a boiler, leaves everybody in hot water. 'Not Guilty,' says the Jury, 'for we can't agree.'

"'Tis a droll verdict,' says O'Grady, for he was the Judge; 'what d'ye mean?'

"'Most of us is for hanging, my Lord, but more of us would let him off.'

"'What will you do, Mr. Attorney,' says the Judge; 'have you any

lence to bring forward?' and the Attorney-General stooped
d began whispering with the Bench. 'Very well,' says the
last, 'we'll discharge him by proclamation.'
t a minute, my Lord,' says ould Blethers, who got five
or the defence, and hadn't yet opened his mouth. 'Before
ted but injured client leaves that dock, I call to your Lord-
he name and on behalf of British justice—I appeal to you,
ernal principles of our glorious Constitution, that he may go
the world with a reputation unstained, and a character un-
.'
so fast, Mister Blethers,' says O'Grady—'not so fast. I'm
r Thieve-na-muck Mountain to-night, and, with the blessing
'll keep your unblemished friend where he is, till morning.'
see the meaning of what I was telling you. 'Tis like tying a
dog's tail."
t quite clear to us whether Purvis comprehended the story, or
d the illustration, but he smiled, and smirked, and looked
for Peter's wine was admirable, and iced to perfection. In-
worthy Scroope, like his sister, was already calculating how to
the occasion," and further cultivate the esteem of one whose
dispositions were so excellent. It was just at this moment
ha glided behind Purvis's chair, and whispered a word in his
atever the announcement, it required some repetition before
quite palpable to his faculties, and it was only after about
tes that his mind seemed to take in all the bearings of the

I ha—have it," cried he. "That's it, eh?" And he winked
gree of cunning that showed the most timely appreciation of

dn't the young lady sit down and take something?" said
fering a seat. "A glass of sweet wine? They've elegant
re."
ks, thanks," said Scroope, apologising for the bashful Martha,
in a bit of a quandary just now. My sister wishes to return
l we cannot remember the name of the hotel."
took a hearty fit of laughing at the absurdity of the dilemma.
well," said he, "you wern't Irish. By my conscience! they'd
bull;" and he shook his sides with merriment. "How did
ere?"
walked," said Martha.
which way did you come?"
you remember, Scroope?"

"Yes, I can re—re—remember that we crossed a little Platz, with a fountain, and came over a wooden bridge, and then down an alley of li—li—linden-trees."

"To be sure ye did," broke in Dalton; "and the devil a walk of five minutes ye could take in any direction here without seeing a fountain, a wooden bridge, and a green lane. 'Tis the same, whichever way you turn, whether you were going to church or the gambling-house. Would you know the name if you hear it? Was it the Schwan?" Purvis shook his head. "Nor the Black Eagle?—nor the 'Cour de Londres?'—nor the Russie?—nor the 'Zäringer?'—nor, in fact, any of the cognate hotels of Baden? Wasn't there a great hall when you entered, with orange-trees all round it, and little couriers, in good lace jackets, smoking and drinking beer?" Scroope thought he had seen something of that sort. "Of course ye did," said Dalton, with another burst of laughter. "'Tis the same in every hotel of the town. There's a clock that never goes, too; and a weather-glass always at 'set fair;' and pictures round the walls of all the wonderful inns in Germany and Switzerland, with coaches-and-four driving in at full gallop, and ladies on the balconies, and saddle-horses waiting, and every diversion in life going on, while, maybe, all the time, the place is dead as Darmstadt."

Scroope recognised the description perfectly, but could give no clue to its whereabouts.

"Maybe 'tis Kaufmayer's—was it painted yellow outside?"

Scroope thought not. "It hadn't a garden in front?" He couldn't say positively; but, if so, it was a small garden. "He didn't remark two dogs in stone beside the door?" No, he had not seen them!

"Then, by the powers!" exclaimed Peter, "I give it up. Nelly's the only body can make anything out of it."

"And who's Ne—Ne—Nelly?" screamed Purvis.

"My daughter, Miss Dalton," said Peter, haughtily, and as if rebuking the liberty of the question.

Scroope hastened to apologise, and suddenly remembered how frequently he had heard of the young Lady from her sister, and how eager Mrs. Ricketts would be to make her acquaintance.

"There's nothing easier than that same," said Dalton. "Just come with me to my little place, and take tea with us. Nelly will be right glad to see them that was kind to her sister; and then we'll try if we can't find out your inn."

"Can we do this, Martha?" cried Scroope, in seeming hesitation.

"I'll speak to my sister," mildly replied she.

"Do then, Miss," said Dalton. "Say 'tis just alone, and in the family way, and that we havn't more than ten minutes' walk from this; or, we'll get a coach if she likes."

The very thought of practising hospitality was ecstasy to honest Peter, who, while Martha retired to consult her sister, ordered in a relay of bottles to beguile the time.

"I like that little ould man," said he, confidingly, to Purvis, while he bent a kindly glance on "the General." "He doesn't say much, and, maybe, he hears less; but he takes his glass pleasantly, and he lays it down when it's empty, with a little sigh. I never knew a bad fellow had that habit."

Scroope hinted that the General was one of the bright stars of the British army.

"I didn't care that he took Tippoo Saib, or Bergen-op-Zoom, and that's a big word—for a wickeder pair of devils, by all accounts, never lived—if he's all right here." And Peter touched the left region of his brawny chest. "If he's good and generous, kind to the poor, and steady to his friends, I'd be prouder to know him than if he was 'Bony,' or Brian Maguire!"

Scroope assured him that the General's greatness took nothing from the kindly qualities of his heart; and, indeed, the mild looks of the old man well corroborated the eulogy; and he and Dalton nodded and drank to each other with all the signs of a most amicable understanding.

Martha was not long absent. She returned with all manner of acknowledgments on the part of her sister; but gratitude was so counterbalanced by delicacy—fears of intrusion were so coupled with enthusiastic delight, that poor Dalton was quite unable to unravel the web, and satisfy himself what were her real intentions.

"Is it that she won't come?" said he, in a state of bewilderment.

"Oh, no," said Martha; "she did not mean that."

"Well, then, she is coming," said he, more contentedly.

"She only fears the inconvenience—the trouble she may give Miss Dalton—not to speak of the abruptness of such a visit."

"She doesn't know Nelly, tell her that. She doesn't know Nelly Dalton," said Peter. "'Tis the same girl doesn't care for trouble or inconvenience; just talk to her about Kate, and you'll pay her well for all she could do for you."

"My sister thinks a carriage would be better, she is so very weak," mildly observed Martha.

"Well, we'll get one in a jiffy. Fritz, my man, send down to the Platz for a shandradan—a waggon, I mean. 'Tis a droll name for a coach." And he laughed heartily at the conceit. "And now, Mr. Purvis, let us finish them before we go. The Gen'ral is doing his part like a man. It's wonderful the nourishment wouldn't put flesh on him—you could shave him with his shin-bone!" And Dalton stared at the frail

figure before him with all the astonishment a great natural curiosity would create.

"What a kind creature! what a really Irish heart!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, as she slowly sailed into the room, and sank into a chair beside Dalton. "It's like a dream, a delicious dream, all this is. To be here in Baden, with my dear Miss Kate Dalton's father—actually going to drink tea.—What a thought, Martha! to drink tea with dearest Nelly!"

Peter began to fear that the prospect of such happiness was about to overwhelm her sensibilities once more; but fortunately, this time, she became more composed, and discussed the visit with wonderful calm and self-possession.

The carriage now drove up, and although Dalton would greatly have preferred a little longer dalliance over the bottle, he politely gave one arm to Mrs. Ricketts, and another to Martha, issuing forth from the Cursaal in all the pride of a conqueror.

CHAPTER XV.

NELLY'S TRIALS.

While Mr. Dalton is accompanying his guests along the Lichtenthal Alley, and describing the various objects of interest on either hand, we will take the opportunity of explaining to our reader why it happened that honest Peter no longer inhabited the little quiet quarters above the toy-shop.

By Kate's liberality, for some time back he had been most freely supplied with money. Scarcely a week passed over without a line from Abel Kraus to say that such or such a sum was placed to his credit; and Dalton once more revelled in those spendthrift habits that he loved. At moments, little flashes of prudential resolve would break upon him. Thoughts of Ireland and of the "old place" would arise, and he would half determine on some course of economy which might again restore him to his home and country. But the slightest prospect of immediate pleasure was sufficient to rout these wise resolves, and Baden was precisely the spot to suggest such "distractions." There was nothing Peter so much liked in the life of this watering-place as the facility with which acquaintance was formed. The stately reserve of English people was his antipathy, and here he saw that all this was laid aside, and that people

conversed freely with the neighbour that chance had given, and that even intimacies grew up between those who scarcely knew each other's names.

Whatever might be thought of these practices by more fastidious critics, to Peter Dalton they appeared admirable. In *his* estimation the world was a great Donnybrook Fair, where everybody came to amuse and be amused. Grave faces and careworn looks, he thought, should stay at home, and not disturb the harmony of what he deemed a great convivial gathering.

It may easily be guessed from this what classes of persons found access to his intimacy, and how every smooth-tongued adventurer, every well-dressed and plausible-looking pretender to fashion, became his companion. Nothing but honest Peter's ignorance of foreign languages set any limit to his acquaintance; and, even with this, he had a shake-hands intimacy with every Chevalier d'Industrie of France and Germany, and a cigar lending and lighting treaty with every long-haired Pole in Baden.

As he dined every day at the Cursaal, he seldom returned home of an evening without some three or four chance acquaintances, whom he presented to Nelly without knowing their names. But they were sure to be "tip-top chaps," and "up to everything." Not that the latter eulogy was much of an exaggeration—the majority of them, indeed, well deserving such a panegyric. If Dalton's long stories about Ireland and its joys or grievances were very uninteresting to these gentlemen, they found some compensation in the goodness of his wine and the abundance of his cigars; and Hock and tobacco digested many a story which, without such adjuncts, would never have found a listener. Play is, however, so paramount to all else at Baden, that, as the season advanced, even a hot supper from the "Russie" and an ice-pail full of champagne-flasks could not attract the company from the fascinations of the gambling-table, and Peter saw that his choice spirits were deserting him.

"You live so far away," cried one. "Your house is full a mile from the Cursaal."

"There is such a climb-up to that crib of yours, Dalton," cried another. "One can't manage it in this hot weather. Why won't you pitch your tent in the plain? It's like going up the Rhigi to try and reach your quarters."

Such and such like were the polite admonitions administered by those who wanted a convenient lounge for their spare half-hours, and who, while affecting to think of their friend, were simply consulting what suited themselves. And is this philosophy confined only to Baden? Is not the world full of friendships that, like cab-fares, are regulated by the

mile! The man who is half a brother to you while you live on the Boulevard du Ghent, becomes estranged from your bosom when you remove to the Champs Elysées; and in these days of rapid transport, ten minutes' walk would separate the most devoted attachments.

Dalton's pride was at first wounded by these remonstrances; but his second thoughts led him to think them more reasonable, and even elevated the grumblers in his esteem. Sure, ain't they the height of the fashion? Sure, isn't everybody trying to get them? Is it any wonder they wouldn't scale a mountain for sake of a glass of wine? The quiet home, so dear to him by many an association—the little window that looked out upon the Alten Schloss, and beside which Nelly sat with him each evening—the small garden underneath, where Hans cultivated his beautiful carnations, and where many a little figure by Nelly's hand graced some bed or alley—all became now distasteful. "The stairs creaked dreadfully; he didn't think they were quite safe. The ceilings were so low, there was no breathing in the rooms. The hill would be the death of him; he had pains in his knees for half the night after he climbed it." Even the bracing air of the mountain, that was his ever boast and pride, was now a "searching, cutting wind, that went through you like a knife." It was a mean-looking little place, too, over a toy-shop, "and Hans himself wasn't what he used to be."

Alas! there was some truth in this last complaint. He had grown more silent and more absent in manner than ever; sometimes would pass whole days without a word, or remain seated in his little garden absorbed in deep thought. The frequenters of his shop would seek in vain for him, and were it not for Nelly, who, in her father's absence, would steal down the stairs and speak to them, the place would have seemed deserted. On one or two occasions she had gone so far as to be his deputy, and sold little articles for him; but her dread of her father's knowing it had made her ill for half the day after.

It was, then, a dreadful blow to Nelly when her father decided on leaving the place. Not alone that it was dear by so many memories, but that its seclusion enabled her to saunter out at will under the shade of the forest trees, and roam for hours along the little lanes of the deep wood. In Hans, too, she took the liveliest interest. He had been their friend when the world went worst with them; his kindness had lightened many a weary burden, and his wise counsels relieved many a gloomy hour. It was true, that of late he was greatly altered. His books, his favourite volumes of Uhland and Tieck, were never opened. He never sat, as of yore, in the garden, burnishing up his quaint old fragments of armour, or gazing with rapture on his strange amulets against evil. Even to the little ballads that she sung he seemed inattentive and indifferent, and would not stop to listen beneath the window as he once did.

His worldly circumstances, too, were declining. He neglected his shop altogether—he made no excursions as of old to Wurms or Nuremberg for new toys. The young generation of purchasers found little they cared for in his antiquated stores, and, after laughing at the quaint old devices by which a past age were amused, they left him. It was in vain that Nelly tried to infuse some interest into the pursuit which once had been his passion. All the little histories he used to weave around his toys—the delusions of fancy in which he revelled, were dissipated and gone, and he seemed like one suddenly awakened from a delicious dream to the consciousness of some afflicting fact. He strenuously avoided the Daltons, too, and even watched eagerly for moments of their absence to steal out and walk in the garden. When by chance they did meet, his manner, instead of its old cordiality, was cold and respectful; and he, whose eyes once sparkled with delight when spoken to, now stood uncovered, and with downcast looks, till they went by him.

No wonder, then, if Dalton thought him changed.

"'Tis nothing but envy's killing him, Nelly," said he. "As long as we were poor like himself, he was happy. It gratified the creature's pride that we were behind with the rent; and while he was buying them images, he was a kind of a patron to you; but he can't bear to see us well off—that's the secret of it all. 'Tis our prosperity is poison to him."

To no end did Nelly try to undeceive her Father on this head. It was a corollary to his old theory about "the 'bad dhrop' that was always in low people." In vain did she remind him of poor Hanserl's well-tried friendship, and the delicacy of a kindness that in no rank of life could have been surpassed. Dalton was rooted in his opinion, and opposition only rendered him more unforgiving.

Quite forgetting the relations which once subsisted between them, he saw nothing in Hanserl's conduct but black ingratitude. "The little chap," he would say, "was never out of the house; we treated him like one of the family; and look at him now!"

"You saw him yourself, Nelly—you saw him shed tears the other day, when you spoke of the Princess. Was that spite or not—tell me that? He couldn't speak with anger when you told him Frank was an Officer."

"Oh, how you mistake these signs of emotion, dearest Father."

"Of course I do. I know nothing—I'm too old—I'm in my dotage. 'Tis my daughter Nelly understands the world, and is able to teach me."

"Would that I knew even less of it; would that I could fall back to the ignorance of those days when all our world was within these walls!"

"And be cutting the images, I hope, again!" said he, scornfully; "why don't you wish for that? It was an elegant trade for a young

[illegible] and family. Well, if there's anything drives me mad, [illegible] figures is scattered about the world, [illegible] that they'll turn up against you!"

"[illegible]," said she, smiling sadly; "you once took an interest in them great as my own."

"It only shows, then, how poverty can break a man's spirit!"

[illegible] like these, once or twice a week, only confirmed Dalton in his dislike to his old abode, and Nelly at last saw that all resistance to his will was hopeless. At last he peremptorily ordered her to give Haus notice of their intended removal, for he had fixed upon a house in the [illegible] Alley to suit them exactly. It was a Villa which had a few months before been purchased and fitted up by a young French Count, whose gains at the gaming-table had been enormous. Scarcely, however, had he taken possession of his sumptuous abode, than "luck" turned; he lost everything in the world, and finished his career by suicide! In a colony of gamblers, where superstition has an overweening influence, none could be found rash enough to succeed to so ill-omened a possession; and thus, for nigh half the season, the house continued shut up and unoccupied. Dalton, whose mind was strongly tinctured with fears of this kind, yet felt a species of heroism in showing that he was not to be deterred by the dangers that others avoided; and as Abel Kraus, to whom the property now belonged, continually assured him "it was just the house for [illegible]," Peter overcame his scruples, and went to see it.

Although of small extent, it was princely in its arrangements. Nothing that French taste and elegance could supply was wanting, and it was a perfect specimen of that costly splendor which in our own day rivals all the gorgeous magnificence of "the Regency." Indeed, it must be owned that honest Peter thought it far too fine to live in; he trod the carpets with a nervous fear of crushing the embroidery, and he sat down on the brocaded sofa with as much terror as though it were glass. How he was ever to go asleep in a bed where Cupid and angels were sculptured in such endless profusion, he couldn't imagine; and he actually shrank back with shame from his own face, as he surveyed it within the silver frame of a costly toilet-glass.

Such were his impressions as he walked through the rooms with Abel, and saw, as the covers were removed from lustres and mirrors, some new and more dazzling object at each moment reveal itself. He listened with astonishment to the account of the enormous sums lavished on these sumptuous articles, and heard how twenty, or thirty, or forty thousand francs had been given for this or that piece of luxury.

What was forty Napoleons a month for such splendour! Kraus was actually lending him the Villa at such a price; and what a surprise for Nelly, when he should show her the little drawing-room in rose-damask

he meant for herself; and then there was a delightful arbour in the garden to smoke in; and the whole distance from the Cursaal was not above ten minutes' walk. Peter's fancy ran over rapidly all the jollifications such a possession would entail; and if he wished, for his own sake, that there was less magnificence, he consoled himself by thinking the effect it would have upon others. As he remarked to himself, "There's many thinks more of the gilding than the gingerbread!"

If Nelly's sorrow at leaving Hanserl's house was deep and sincere, it became downright misery when she learned to what they were about to remove. She foresaw the impulse his extravagance would receive from such a residence, and how all the costliness of decoration would suggest wasteful outlay. Her Father had not of late confided to her the circumstances of his income. He who once could not change a crown without consulting her, and calling in her aid to count the pieces and test their genuineness, would now negotiate the most important dealings without her knowledge. From his former distrust of Kraus he grew to believe him the perfection of honesty. There is something so captivating to a wasteful man in being freely supplied with money—with receiving his advances in a spirit of apparent frankness—that he would find it impossible to connect such liberality with a mean or interested motive. Kraus' little back room was then a kind of California, where he could dig at discretion; and if, in an unusual access of prudence, honest Peter would ask, "How do we stand, Abel?" Kraus was sure to be too busy to look at the books, and would simply reply, "What does it matter? How much do you want?" From such a dialogue as this Dalton would issue forth the very happiest of men, muttering, to himself, how differently the world would have gone with him if he "had known that little chap thirty or forty years ago."

Without one gleam of comfort—with terror on every side—poor Nelly took possession of her splendour to pass days of unbroken sorrow. Gloomy as the unknown future seemed, the tidings she received of Kate and Frank were still sadder.

From her sister she never heard directly. A few lines from Madame de Heidendorf, from a country house near St. Petersburgh, told her that the Prince had not succeeded in obtaining the Imperial permission, and that the marriage was deferred indefinitely; meanwhile the betrothed Princess lived a life of strict seclusion, as the etiquette required, seeing none but such members of the Royal Family as deigned to visit her. Poor Nelly's heart was nigh to bursting as she thought over her dear Kate—the gay and brilliant child, the happy, joyous girl, now pining away in dreary imprisonment. This image was never out of her mind, and she would sit hour after hour in tears for her poor sister. What future happiness, however great it might be, could repay a youth passed

in misery like this? What splendour could efface the impression of this dreary solitude, away from all who loved and cared for her?

Of Frank, the tidings were worse again. A short and scarcely intelligible note from Count Stephen informed her that, "although the Court-Martial had pronounced a sentence of death, the Emperor, rather than stain a name distinguished by so many traits of devotion to his house, had commuted the punishment to imprisonment for life at Moucacs. "There was," he added, "a slight hope that, after some years, even this might be relaxed, and banishment from the Imperial dominions substituted. Meanwhile," said the old soldier, "I have retired for ever from a career where, up to this hour, no stain of dishonour attached to me. The name which I bore so long with distinction is now branded with shame, and I leave the service to pass the few remaining days of my life wherever obscurity can best hide my sorrow and my ignominy!"

Although Nelly at once answered this afflicting letter, and wrote again and again to Vienna, to Milan, and to Prague, she never received any reply, nor could obtain the slightest clue to what the sentence on Frank referred. To conceal these terrible events from her father was her first impulse; and although she often accused herself of duplicity for so doing, she invariably came round to her early determination. To what end embitter the few moments of ease he had enjoyed for years past? Why trouble him about what is irremediable, and make him miserable about those from whom his careless indifference asks nothing and requires nothing? Time enough, when the future looks brighter, to speak of the sorrows of the past!

This task of secrecy was not a difficult one. Dalton's was not a nature to speculate on possible mischances, so much as to hope for impossible good turns of fortune; and when he knew that Kate had sent him money, and Frank did not ask for any, the measure of his contentment was filled. Kate was a Princess, and Frank an Officer of Hussars; and that they were as happy as the day was long, he would have taken an oath before any "Justice of the Quorum," simply because he saw no reason why they ought not to be so; and when he drank their healths every day after dinner, and finished a bumper of champagne to their memory, he perfectly satisfied his conscience that he had discharged every parental duty in their behalf! His "God bless you, my darling child!" was the extent of his piety as of his affection; and so he lived in the firm belief that he had a heart overflowing with good, and kind and generous sentiments. The only unpleasant feelings he had were for Nelly. Her eyes, that in spite of all her efforts showed recent tears—her pale face—her anxious, nervous manner, worried and grieved him. "There's something strange about that girl," he would say to himself; "she would sing the whole day long when we hadn't a shilling, and the

price of our dinner; she was as merry as a lark, cutting out them images till two or three o'clock of a morning; and now that we have lashings and leavings of everything, with all manner of diversions about us, there she sits moping and fretting the whole day." His ingenuity could detect no explanation for this. "To be sure, she was lame, and it might grieve her to look at dancing, in which she could take no part. But when did she ever show signs of an envious nature? She was growing old, too—at least she was six or seven-and-twenty—and no prospect of being married; but was Nelly the girl to grieve over this? Were not all her affections and all her hopes home-bound? 'Twasn't fretting to be back in Ireland that she could be!—she knew little of it before she left it." And thus he was at the end of all his surmises, without being nearer the solution.

We have said enough to show that Nelly's sorrow was not causeless, and that she had good reason to regret the days of even their hardest fortune.

"Had we been but contented as we were!" cried she—"had we resisted ambitions for which we were unfitted, and turned away from 'paths in life' too steep and too arduous for our strength, we might have been happy now! Who can say, too, what development of mind and intelligence should not have come of this life of daily effort and exertion? Frank would have grown manly, patient, and self-relying—Kate would have been, as she ever was, the light of our home, making us sharers in all those gifts of her own bright and happy nature—while even I, might have risen to worthier efforts of skill than those poor failures I have now to blush for."

Such were the regrets which filled her heart, as she sat many an hour in solitude, grieving over the past, and yet afraid to face the future.

CHAPTER XVI.

"AN ACT OF SETTLEMENT."

Were we disposed to heroics, we might compare Mrs. Ricketts' sensations, on entering the grounds of the villa, to the feelings experienced by the ancient Gauls when, from the heights of the Alps, they gazed down on the fertile plains of Italy. If less coloured by the glorious hues of conquering ambition, they were not the less practical. She saw that, with her habitual good fortune, she had piloted the Ricketts' barque into a safe and pleasant anchorage, where she might at her leisure refit and lay in stores for future voyaging. Already she knew poor Dalton, as she herself said, from "cover to cover"—she had sounded all the shallows

and shoals of his nature, and read his vanity, his vain-glorious importance, and his selfish pride, as though they were printed on his forehead. Were Nelly to be like Kate, the victory, she thought, could not be very difficult. "Let her have but one predominant passion, and be it love of admiration, avarice, a taste for dress, for scandal, or for grand society, it matters not, I'll soon make her my own."

"This will do! Martha," whispered she, in Miss Ricketts' ear, as they drove up the approach.

"I think so," was the low uttered reply.

"Tell Scroope to be cautious—very cautious," whispered she once more; and then turned to Dalton, to expatiate on the beauty of the grounds, and the exquisite taste displayed in their arrangement.

"It has cost me a mint of money," said Dalton, giving away irresistibly to his instinct of boastfulness. "Many of those trees you see there came from Spain and Portugal, and not only the trees, but the earth that's round them."

"Did you hear that, Martha?" interposed Mrs. Ricketts. "Mr Dalton very wisely remarks that man is of all lands, while the inferior productions of nature require their native soils as a condition of existence."

"Yes, indeed," said Dalton, fathering the sentiment at once; "'tis only the Blacks that can't bear the cowld. But, after all, maybe, they're not the same as ourselves."

"I own I never could think them so," smiled Mrs. Ricketts, as though the very appearance of Peter Dalton had confirmed the prejudice.

"Faix! I'm glad to hear you say that," said he, delightedly. "'Tis many's the battle Nelly and me has about that very thing. There's the Villa, now—what d'ye think of it?"

"Charming—beautiful—a paradise!"

"Quite a paradise!" echoed Martha.

"'Tis a mighty expensive paradise, let me tell you," broke in Peter. "I've a gardener, and four chaps under him, and sorrow a thing I ever see them do but cut nosegays and stick little bits of wood in the ground. with hard names writ on them; that's what they call gardening here. As for a spade or a hoe, there's not one in the country; they do everything with a case-knife and watering-pot."

"You amaze me," said Mrs. Ricketts, who was determined on being instructed in horticulture.

"There's a fellow now, with a bundle of moss-roses for Nelly, and there's another putting out the parrot's cage under a tree—that's the day's work for both of them."

"And are you not happy, to think how your ample means diffuses ease and enjoyment on all around you? Don't tell me that the pleasure you feel is not perfect ecstasy."

"That's one way of considering it," said Dalton, dubiously, for he was not quite sure whether he could, or could not, yield his concurrence.

"But if people didn't la—la—la——"

"Lay a bed, you mean," cried Dalton; "that's just what they do; a German wouldn't ask to awake at all, if it wasn't to light his pipe."

"I meant la—la—labour; if they didn't la—labour the ground, we should all be starved."

"No political economy, Scroope," cried Mrs. Ricketts; "I will not permit it. That dreadful science is a passion with him, Mr. Dalton."

"Is it?" said Peter, confusedly, to whose ears the word economy only suggested notions of saving and sparing. "I can only say," added he, after a pause, "tastes differ, and I never could abide it at all."

"I was certain of it," resumed Mrs. Ricketts; "but here comes a young lady towards us—Miss Dalton, I feel it must be."

The surmise was quite correct. It was Nelly, who, in expectation of meeting her father, had walked down from the house, and now, seeing a carriage, stood half irresolute what to do.

"Yes, that's Nelly," cried Dalton, springing down to the ground; "she'll be off now, for she thinks it's visitors come to see the place."

While Dalton hastened to overtake his daughter, Mrs. Ricketts had time to descend and shake out all her plumage—a proceeding of manual dexterity to which Martha mainly contributed; indeed, it was almost artistic in its way, for while feathers were disposed to droop here, and lace taught to fall gracefully there, the fair Zoe assumed the peculiar mood in which she determined on conquest.

"How do I look, Martha?" said she, bridling up, and then smiling.

"Very sweetly—quite charming," replied Martha.

"I know that," said the other, pettishly; "but am I maternal—am I affectionate?"

"Very maternal—most affectionate," was the answer.

"You're a fool," said Mrs. Ricketts, contemptuously; but had barely time to restore her features to their original blandness, when Nelly came up. The few words in which her father had announced Mrs. Ricketts, spoke of her as one who had known and been kind to Kate, and Nelly wanted no stronger recommendation to her esteem.

The quiet, gentle manner of the young girl, the almost humble simplicity of her dress, at once suggested to Mrs. Ricketts the tone proper for the occasion, and she decided on being natural; which, to say truth, was the most remote thing from nature it is well possible to conceive. Poor Nelly was not, however, a very shrewd critic, and she felt quite happy to be so much at her ease as they walked along to the house together.

"That's one way of considering it," said Dalton, dubiously, for he was not quite sure whether he could, or could not, yield his concurrence.

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The quiet, gentle manner of the young girl, the almost humble simplicity of her dress, at once suggested to Mrs. Ricketts the tone proper for the occasion, and she decided on being natural; which, to say truth, [illegible] the most remote thing from nature it is well possible to conceive. [illegible] was not, however, a very shrewd critic, and she felt quite [illegible] much at her ease as they walked along to the house

"That's one way of considering it," said Dalton, dubiously, for he was not quite sure whether he could, or could not, yield his concurrence.

"But if people didn't la—la—la——"

"Lay a bed, you mean," cried Dalton; "that's just what they do; a German wouldn't ask to awake at all, if it wasn't to light his pipe."

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Mrs. Ricketts saw that Kate was the key-note to all her sister's affection, and therefore talked away of her unceasingly. To have heard her, one would have thought they had been inseparable, and that Kate had confided to the dear old lady the most secret thoughts of her heart. The amiable Zoe did, indeed, contrive to effect this, rather by the aid of an occasional sigh, a tone of lamentation and sorrow, than by direct assertion; all conveying the impression that she was cut to the heart about something, but would rather be "brayed in a mortar" than tell it. Martha's mild and submissive manner won rapidly on Nelly, and she wondered whether Kate had liked her. In fact, the visitors were all so very unlike the usual company her Father presented to her, she felt disposed to think the best of them; and even Scroope came in for a share of her good opinion.

The interior of the Villa changed the current of conversation, and now Mrs. Ricketts felt herself at home, examining the rich brocade of the hangings, the bronzes, and the inlaid tables.

"Lyons silk—twenty-four francs a metre!" whispered she to Scroope.

"I thought they hadn't a s—s—six—pence," observed the other.

"All these things are new, Scroope!—all new!"

"I—I—I was ob—serving that, sister."

"What a creature he is, Scroope!—what a creature!"

"And the daughter, I suspect, is only ha—ha—half—witted."

"Humph!" ejaculated Zoe, as though she did not quite coincide with that opinion.

The confidential dialogue was broken in upon by Dalton, who, having dragged the poor General over the terrace and the flower-garden, was now showing them the inside of the dwelling.

"If I could but see dear Kate here!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, as she slowly sank into a downy chair, "I'd fancy this was home. It's all so like herself,—such graceful elegance, such tasteful splendour."

"It's neat—I think it's neat," said Dalton, almost bursting with the effort to repress his delight.

"Oh, Sir, it's princely! It's worthy the great name of its possessor. Dear Kate often told me of her beautiful home."

"I thought you li—li—lived—over a toy-shop? Foglass said you li—lived——"

"So we did, while the place was getting ready," said Dalton, flushing.

"Just let me sit here, and watch the rippling of that shining river!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, laying her hand on Dalton's, and, by a melting look, withdrawing him from Scroope's unlucky reminiscence. "If I could but pass the night here, I feel it would be ecstasy."

"What easier, if it's in earnest you are?" cried Dalton. "We never

make use of this little drawing-room. Nelly will get you a bed put up in it in five minutes."

"Isn't that Irish, Scroope!—isn't that what I often told you of Ireland?" cried Zoe, as her eyes glistened.

"Well, but I'm not joking," resumed Dalton; "small as the place is, we can make room for you all. We'll put Miss Martha in Nelly's room, and the General can have mine; and there's a mighty snug little place for you in the garden."

"Oh dear, dear, dear Ireland, how I love you!" said Mrs. Ricketts, closing her eyes, and affecting to talk in her sleep.

"There's worse places," murmured Dalton, who drank in national flattery as the pleasantest "tipple" after personal. "But say the word, now, and see if we won't make you comfortable."

"Comfortable!—you mean happy, supremely happy," ejaculated Zoe.

"And there's no inconvenience in it, none whatever," continued Dalton, who now was breast high in his plot. "That's a fine thing in this little town of Baden; you can have everything at a moment's warning, from a sirloin of beef to a strait-waistcoat."

Now Mrs. Ricketts laughed, till her eyes overflowed with tears, at Dalton's drollery; and Scroope, too, cackled his own peculiar cry; and the old General chimed in with a faint wheezing sound—a cross between the wail of an infant and a death-rattle; in the midst of which Dalton hurried away to seek Nelly, who was showing the garden to Martha.

"Now, mind me, Scroope," cried Mrs. Ricketts, as soon as they were alone, "no selfishness, no eternal trouble about your own comfort. We may probably pass the summer here, and——"

"But I—I—I—won't sleep under the stairs, I—I—I—promise you," cried he, angrily.

"You had a dear little room, with a lovely view, at Noëringhen. You are most ungrateful."

"It was a d—dear little room, six feet square, and looked out on a tannery. My skin would have been leather if I st—st—stayed another week in it."

"Martha slept in a wardrobe, and never complained."

"For that matter, I passed two months in a sh—shower-bath," cried Scroope; "but I—I—won't do it a—any more."

To what excesses his rebellious spirit might have carried him it is hard to say, for Dalton now came up with Nelly, who was no less eager than her Father to offer the hospitalities of the Villa. At the hazard of detracting in the reader's esteem from all this generous liberality, we feel bound to add, that neither Dalton nor his daughter ever speculated on the lengthened sojourn which Mrs. Ricketts' more prophetic spirit foreshadowed.

The accidental mistake about the hotel first suggested the offer, which of course the next day was sure to obviate. And now, as it has so often been an unpleasant task to record little flaws and frailties of the Ricketts' nature, let us take the opportunity of mentioning some traits of an opposite kind, which, even as a "set off," are not valueless. Nothing could be more truly amiable than the conduct of the whole family when the question of their stay had been resolved upon. Had Scroope been bred a cabinet-maker, he couldn't have been handier with bed-screws, laths, and curtain-rods. Martha, divested of shawl and bonnet, arranged toilet-tables and looking-glasses like the most accomplished housemaid; while, reclined in her easy chair, the fair Zoe vouchsafed praises on all the efforts around her, and nodded, as Jove might, on mortal endeavours to conciliate him.

Poor Nelly was in ecstasy at all this goodness; such a united family was a perfect picture. Nothing seemed to inconvenience them—nothing went wrong. There was a delightfully playful spirit in the way; they met and conquered little difficulties, and whenever hard pushed by Fate, there was a wonderful reticule of Mrs. Ricketts' which was sure to contain something to extricate them at once. Since Aladdin's lamp, there never was such a magical contrivance as that bag; and the Wizard of the North, who makes pancakes in a gentleman's hat and restores it unstained, and who, from the narrow limits of a snuff-box, takes out feathers enough to stuff a pillow-case, would have paled before the less-surprising but more practical resources of the "Ricketts' sack."

Various articles of toilet necessity, from objects peculiarly the lady's own, down to the General's razors, made their appearance. An impertinent curiosity might have asked why a lady going to dine at a public ordinary should have carried about with her such an array of night-jackets, cordials, lotions, slippers, hair-brushes, and nightcaps; but it is more than likely that Mrs. Ricketts would have smiled at the short-sighted simplicity of the questioner, as she certainly did at poor Nelly's face of quiet astonishment.

It was a downright pleasure to make sacrifices for people so ready to accommodate themselves to circumstances, and who seemed to possess a physical pliancy not inferior to the mental one. The General wanted no window to shave at. Martha could bestow herself within limits that seemed impossible to humanity. As for Scroope, he was what French dramatists call "a grand utility"—now climbing up ladders to arrange curtain-rods, now descending to the cellars in search of unknown and nameless requisites. A shrewd observer might have wondered that such extensive changes in the economy of a household were effected for the sake of one night's accommodation; but this thought seldom occurred to

Dalton nor his daughter, who were, indeed, too full of admiration for their guests' ingenuity and readiness, to think of anything else.

As for honest Peter, a house full of company was his delight. As he took his place that evening at the supper-table, he was supremely happy. Nor was it wonderful, considering the pleased looks and bland faces that he saw on each side of him. All his stories were new to his present audience. Mount Dalton and its doings were an anecdotic mine, of which they had never explored a single "shaft." The grandeur of his family was a theme all listened to with interest and respect; and as Mrs. Ricketts' flattery was well-timed and cleverly administered, and Scroope's blunders fewer and less impertinent than usual, the evening was altogether a very pleasant one, and, as the cant is, went off admirably.

If Nelly had now and then little misgivings about the over-anxiety to please displayed by Mrs. Ricketts, and a certain exaggerated appreciation she occasionally bestowed upon her Father's "Irishism," she was far too distrustful of her own judgment not to set down her fears to ignorance of life and its conventionalities. "It would ill become *her*," she thought, "to criticise people so well-bred and so well-mannered;" and this modest depreciation of herself saved the others.

It was thus that the hosts felt towards their guests as they wished them good night, and cordially shook hands at parting.

"As agreeable an old lady as ever I met," said Dalton to his daughter; "and not wanting in good sense, either."

"I like Miss Martha greatly," said Nelly. "She is so gently-mannered and so mild, I'm sure Kate was fond of her."

"I like them all but the little chap with the stutter, he seems so curious about everything."

"They are all so pleased—so satisfied with everything," said Nelly, enthusiastically.

"And why wouldn't they? There's worse quarters, let me tell you, than this! It isn't under Peter Dalton's roof that people go to bed hungry. I wouldn't wonder if they'd pass a day or two with us."

"Do you think so?" said Nelly, scarcely knowing whether to be pleased or the reverse.

"We'll see to-morrow," said Dalton, as he took his candle and began to climb up the stairs to the room which he was now to occupy instead of his own chamber, singing, as he went, an old ballad:

The whole Balrothery hunt was there, and welcome were they all!
With two in a bed, and four on the stairs, and twelve in the Bachelor's hall!

Leaving Dalton to con over the stray verses of his once favourite ballad as he dropped off to sleep, we turn for a moment to the chamber which, by right of conquest, was held by the fair Zoe, and where, before a large mirror, she was now seated; while Martha was engaged upon

that wonderful head, whose external machinery was almost as complex as its internal. Mrs. Ricketts had resolved upon adopting a kind of materno-protective tone towards Nelly; and the difficulty now was to hit off a "coiffure" to sustain that new character. It should combine the bland with the dignified, and be simple without being severe. There was something Memnonic in that large old head, from which the grey hair descended in massive falls, that seemed worthy of better things than a life of petty schemes and small intrigues; and the patient Martha looked like one whose submissive nature should have been bent to less ignoble burdens than the capricious fretfulness of a tiresome old woman. But so is it every day in life: qualities are but what circumstances make them, and even great gifts become but sorry aids when put to base uses!

There was another figure in the group, and for him no regrets arise as to talents misapplied and tastes perverted. Nature had created Scroope Purvis for one line of character, and he never ventured to walk out of it. In a large and showy dressing-gown belonging to his host, and a pair of most capacious slippers from the same wardrobe, Scroope had come down to assist at a Cabinet Council. He had just performed a voyage of discovery round the house, having visited every available nook, from the garret to the cellars, and not omitting the narrow chamber to which Nelly herself had retired, with whom he kept up an amicable conversation for several minutes, under pretence of having mistaken his room. Thence he had paid a visit to old Andy's den; and, after a close scrutiny of the larder, and a peep between the bars at the dairy, came back with the honest conviction that he had done his duty.

"It's sm—small, sister—it's very small," said he, entering her chamber.

"It's not smaller than Mrs. Balfour's cottage at the Lakes, and you know we spent a summer there," said the Lady, rebukingly.

"But we had it all to—to—our—selves, sister."

"So much the worse. A cook and a cellar are admirable fixtures. The curls lower down on the sides, Martha. I don't want to look like Grisi." There was something comforting in the last assurance, for it would have sorely tested poor Martha's skill had the wish been the reverse.

"They don't seem to ha—have been long here, sister. The knife-board in the scullery hasn't been used above a—a—few times. I shouldn't wonder if old Da—Da—Dalton won the Villa at play."

"Fudge!—Fuller on the brow, Martha—more expansive there."

"Isn't the girl vulgar, sister?" asked Scroope.

"Decidedly vulgar, and dressed like a fright! I thought it was only you, Martha, that rolled up the back hair like a snail's shell." Martha blushed, but never spoke. "I suppose she's the same that used to cut the pipe-heads and the umbrella-tops. I remarked that her fingers were all knotted and hard."

"Her smile is very pleasing," submitted Martha, diffidently.

"It's like her father's laugh—far too natural for my taste! There's o refinement, no elegance, in one of your sweet, unmeaning smiles. I hought I had told you that at least twenty times, Martha. But you ave grown self-willed and self-opinionated of late, and I must say, you ouldn't have a graver fault! Correct it in time, I beseech you."

"I'll try," said Martha, in a very faint voice.

"If you try, you'll succeed. Look at your brother. See what he has ecome. There's an example might stimulate you."

Another and a far deeper sigh was all Martha's acknowledgment of his speech.

"He was the same violent, impetuous creature that you are. There, ou needn't tear my hair out by the roots to prove it! He wouldn't rook the very mildest remonstrance; he was passionate and irrestrainble, and see—see what I've made him. Oh, you spiteful creature, how ou hurt me!"

This cry of pain was not quite causeless, for Martha was trembling om head to foot, and actually only saved herself from falling by a mehanical clutch at something like a horse's tail. With many excuses, nd in a voice broken by regrets, she resumed her task with a vigorous ffort for success, while Mrs. Ricketts and Purvis exchanged glances of upreme contempt.

"I speak to you, Martha," resumed she, "for your own sake. You canot see what all the world sees—the sinful selfishness of your nature—a ice, I must say, the less pardonable, that you live beneath the shadow f my counsels!—Scroope, don't creak that chair—sit upon that stool ere. Now that we shall probably spend two months here——"

"Here!—Do—do you m—mean here?" cried Purvis.

"Of course I mean here, Sir. There's nothing in the shape of a dging to be had under three and four hundred francs a month. This a very sweet place, and when the old gentleman can be induced to ake a room in the town for himself, and that his daughter learns, as she ill—though certainly not from Martha—what is due to *me!* it will be omfortable and convenient. We'll ask the Princess, too, to spend a week ith us; for who knows, in the present state of politics, to what corner f Germany we may yet be reduced to fly!"

"How will you m—m—manage with Haggerstone and the rest, hen they arrive, sister?"

"Easily enough. I'll show them that it's for their advantage that e are here. It is true that we agreed to take a house together; but very plan is modified by the events of the campaign. Petrolaffsky will e content if Mr. Dalton plays picquet; the Colonel will like his claret

and Burgundy; and Foghus will be planted [illegible] permits him to prosecute his attentions to Martha."

Poor Martha blushed crimson at the tone, rather, even than the words of the speech, for, when nothing else offered, it was the practice of Mrs. Ricketts to insinuate coquetry as among her sister's defects.

"You needn't look so much confused, my dear," resumed the torturer. "I'm certain it's not the first affair of the kind you've known."

"Oh, sister!" cried Martha, in a voice of almost entreaty.

"Not that I think there would be anything unsuitable in the match; he is probably fifty-eight or nine—sixty at most—and, excepting deafness and the prosy tendency natural to his time of life, pretty much like everybody else."

"You know, sister, that *he* never thought of *me*, nor *I* of *him*."

"I know that I am not in the confidence of either party," said Mrs. Ricketts, bridling; "and I also know I am sincerely happy that my head is not crammed with such fiddle-faddle. Before the great event comes off, however, you will have time to attend to something else, and therefore I beg you will keep in mind what I am about to say to you. We are here, Martha," resumed she, with all the solemnity of a judicial charge—"we are here by no claims of relationship or previous friendship. No secret ties of congenial tastes bind us up together. No common attachment to some other dear creature forms a link between us. We are here as much by chance as one can venture to call anything in this unhappy world. Let us, then, show Fortune that we are not unworthy of her goodness, by neglecting nothing which may strengthen our position and secure our permanence. In a word, Martha, throw over all your selfishness—forget the miserable egotism that besets you, and study that young girl's character and wishes. She has never been courted in life, flatter her—she has never been even thought of, show her every consideration; she is evidently of a thoughtful turn, and nobody can mope better than yourself. Insinuate yourself day by day into little household affairs, mingling counsels here, and warnings there—always on the side of economy—so that while affecting only to play with the reins, you'll end by driving the coach."

"I'm afraid I've no head for all this, sister."

"Of course you havn't, nor for anything else without me to guide you. I'm perfectly aware of that. But you can learn. You can at least obey!"

"My sister means that you can st—st—struggle against the natural w—w—wilfulness of your d—disposition," cackled in Purvis.

"I'll do my best," murmured Martha, in a voice of humility.

"Women are so fond of sa—saving," cried Scroope, "you'll always be safe when you c—c—cut down the estimates."

"Attend to that, Martha!" remarked Mrs. Ricketts.

"Find out the price of ch—chickens, and always buy them a kreutzer cheaper than she has done."

"There is nothing gives such an ascendency in a house as showing that you can maintain the establishment for fourpence less per quarter," said Zoe, gravely. "I have known connubial happiness, that has stood the test of temper and illness for years, wrecked on the small rock of a cook's bill. Like all wasteful men, you may be sure that this Dalton has many miserly habits. Learn these, and indulge them. There was that poor Marquis of Binchley, that never dined without a hundred wax candles in the room, left all his fortune to a nephew he once found collecting the sealing-wax from old letters and making it up for fresh use. Reflect upon this, Martha; and always bear in mind that the vices of mankind are comparatively uninstructive. It is their foibles, their small weaknesses, that teach everything."

"When Ha—Ha—Haggerstone comes, and finds no room for him, you'll ha—ha—have the devil to pey."

"He shall 'take it out' in dinners, Scroope; and what between drinking Dalton's wine with him, and abusing him behind his back, you'll see, he'll be perfectly happy."

"How long do you purpose to st—stay here, sister?" asked Scroope.

"Ask the butterfly how long the rose and the hyacinth will bloom," said Mrs. Ricketts, pensively; for, by dint of smiling at herself in the looking-glass, she had come round to that mock poetical vein which ran through her strange, incongruous nature. "And now good night, dears," sighed she. "These are sweet moments, but they are paid for at a price. Exhausted energies will have repose." She held out her hand to Martha, who kissed it respectfully, and then waved a graceful adieu to Purvis as he retired.

"Sister Zoe has a head for everything," muttered Purvis to Martha. "There's nothing she's not up to."

"She is very clever indeed!" sighed Martha.

"And this isn't the worst h—hit she has ever made. It was d—deucedly well done, to get in here."

Either Martha didn't concur in the sentiment, or that Scroope's satisfaction did not need any backing, for she made no reply.

"They've given me a capital room; I fa—fancy Dalton's own, for I found a heap of old bills and letters in a table-drawer, and something like a—like a—like a writ"—here he laughed, till the tears came at the drollery of the thought—"in the pocket of his dressing-gown."

"Good night," said Martha, softly, as she glided into the little chamber allotted to her. Poor Martha! Save Nelly's, hers was the sad-

dest heart beneath that roof. For the first time in all her long years of trial, a ray of doubt, a flash of infidelity had broken upon her mind, and the thought of her sister-in-law's infallibility became for a moment suspected. It was not that abused and outraged submission was goaded into rebellion; it was dormant reason that was suddenly startled into a passing wakefulness. It was like one of those fitful gleams of intelligence which now and then dart across the vacuity of dulled intellects, and, like such, it was only a meteor-flash, and left no trace of light behind it. Even in all its briefness the anguish it gave was intense; it was the delusion of a whole life rent asunder at once, and the same shock which should convulse the moral world of her thoughts, would rob her of all the pleasantest fancies of her existence. If Zoe were not all goodness and all genius, what was to become of all the household gods of the Villino? Titians would moulder away into stained and smoked panels; "Sèvres" and "Saxe" would fall down to pasteboard and starch; carved oak and ebony would resolve themselves into leather; and even the friendship of Princes and the devotion of Philosophers be only a mockery, a sham, and a snare!

Poor Martha! Deprived of these illusions, life was but one unceasing round of toil; while, aided by Imagination, she could labour on unwearied. Without a thought of deception, she gloried in the harmless frauds to which she contributed, but couldn't resist the contagion of credulity around her. How easily could such a spirit have been moulded to every good gift, and qualities like these have been made to minister to comfort and happiness, and the faith that was given to gilt paper, and glue, and varnish, elevated to all that is highest in the moral and material world!

And now they were all in slumber beneath that roof—all, save one. Poor Nelly sat at her window, tearful and sad. In the momentary excitement of receiving her guests she had forgotten her cares; but now they came back upon her, coupled with all the fears their wasteful habits could suggest. At times she blamed herself for the tame cowardice which beset her, and restrained her from every effort to avert the coming evil; and at times she resigned herself to the gloomy future, with the stern patience of the Indian who saw his canoe swept along into the rapids above the cataract. There was not one to turn to for advice or counsel, and the strength that would have sustained her in any other trial, was here sapped by the dread of giving pain to her father. "It would ill become *me* to give him cause for sorrow—I, that of all his children have ministered nothing to his pride nor his happiness!" Such was the estimate she held of herself, and such the reasoning that flowed from it.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE "CURSAAL."

THE attempt to accommodate a company to which the house was unsuited would have been a source of painful annoyance to most men. To Peter Dalton it was unqualified pleasure. The subversion of all previous arrangement, the total change in the whole order of domesticity, were his delight. The changing of rooms, the being sent to sleep in strange and inconvenient corners, the hurry-scurry endeavours to find a substitute for this, or a representative for that, the ingenious devices to conceal a want or to supply a deficiency, afforded him the most lively amusement; and he went about rubbing his hands, and muttering that it did his heart good. It was "so like Mount Dalton when he was a boy."

All Mrs. Ricketts' softest blandishments were so many charms clean thrown away. His thoughts were centred on himself and his own amiable qualities, and he revelled in the notion that the world did not contain another as truly generous and as hospitable as Peter Dalton. In accordance with the singular contradictions of which his character was made up, he was willing to incur every sacrifice of personal inconvenience, if it only served to astonish some one, or excite a sensation of surprise at his goodnature; and while all Nelly's efforts were to conceal the inconveniences these hospitalities inflicted, Peter was never satisfied except when the display could reflect honour on himself, and exact a tribute of flattery from his guests. Nor was he all this time in ignorance of Mrs. Ricketts' character. With native shrewdness he had at once detected her as an "old soldier;" he saw the practised readiness of her compliance with everything; he saw the spirit of accommodation in which she met every plan or project; he knew the precise value of her softest look or her sweetest smile; and yet he was quite content with possessing the knowledge, without any desire to profit by it. Like one who sits down to play with sharpers, and resolves that either the stake shall be a trifle or the roguery be very limited, he surrendered himself to the fair Zoe's seductions, with this sort of a reservation to guide him.

If Mrs. Ricketts did not cheat him by her goodness, she took her revenge by the claims of her grandeur. Her intimacy with great people—the very greatest—exalted her to the highest place in Dalton's esteem. Honest Peter knew nothing of the years of toil and pain—the subtle arts—the deep devices—the slights—the affronts—the stern

rebuffs here—the insolent denials there—by which these acquisitions, precarious as they were, had been won. He did not know how much of the royalty was left-handed, nor how much of the nobility was factitious. All he could see was the gracious salutes wafted to her from coronetted carriages, the soft smiles wafted from high places, the recognitions bestowed on her in the promenade, and the gracious nods that met her in the Cursaal.

Mrs. Ricketts was perfect in all the skill of this peculiar game, and knew how, by the most ostentatious display of respect in public, not only to exalt the illustrious personage who deigned to acknowledge her, but also to attach notice to herself as the individual so highly favoured. What reverential curtsies would she drop before the presence of some small German "Hochheit," with a gambling-house for a palace, and a roulette-table for an exchequer! What devotional observances would she perform in front of the chair of some snuffy old Dowager "Herzogin," of an unknown or forgotten principality! How pertinaciously would she remain standing till some "Durchlaut" was "out of the horizon;" or how studiously would she retire before the advancing step of some puny potentate—a monarch of three hussars and thirty chamberlains! Poor Peter was but a sorry pupil in this "School of Design." He found it difficult to associate rank with unwashed faces and unbrushed clothes; and, although he *did* bow, and flourish his hat, and perform all the other semblances of respect, he always gave one the idea of an irreverential Acolyte, at the back of a profoundly impressed and dignified High Priest.

Dalton was far more at his ease when he paraded the rooms with Mrs. Ricketts on one arm and Martha on the other, enjoying heartily all the notice they elicited, and accepting, as honest admiration, the staring wonderment and surprise their appearance was sure to excite. Mrs. Ricketts, who had always something geographical about her taste in dress, had this year leaned towards the Oriental, and accordingly presented herself before the admiring world of Baden in a richly-spangled muslin turban, and the very shortest of petticoats, beneath which appeared a pair of ample trousers, whose deep lace frills covered the feet, and even swept the floor; a paper-knife of silver gilt, made to resemble a yataghan, and a smelling-bottle, in the counterfeit of a pistol, glittered at her girdle, which, with the aid of a very-well-arched pair of painted eyebrows, made up as presentable a Sultana as one usually sees in a second-rate theatre. If Dalton's blue coat and tight nankeen pantaloons—his favourite full-dress costume—did somewhat destroy the "Bosphorean illusion," as Zoe herself called it, still more did Martha's plain black silk and

straw bonnet—both types of the strictly useful, without the slightest taint of extraneous ornament.

Purvis and the General, as they brought up the rear, came also in for their meed of surprise. The one, lost under a mass of cloaks, shawls, scarfs, and carpets; and the other, moving listlessly along through the crowded rooms, heedless of the mob and the music, and seeming to follow his leader with a kind of fatuous instinct utterly destitute of volition or even of thought. A group, so singularly costumed, seen every day dining at the most costly table, ordering whatever was most expensive; the patrons of the Band, and the numerous flower-girls, whose bouquets were actually strewed beneath their feet, were sure to attract the notice of the company; a tribute, it must be owned, which invariably contains a strong alloy of all that is illnatured, sarcastic, and depreciating. Zoe was an European celebrity; known and recognised by every one. The only difficulty was to learn who the new "Victim" was, whence he came, and what means he possessed? There are few places where inventive genius more predominates than at Baden, and Dalton was alternately a successful Speculator in railroads—a South American Adventurer—a Slaver—and a Carlist Agent: characters for which honest Peter had about as many requisites as he possessed for Hamlet or Cardinal Wolsey. He seemed to have abundance of money, however, and played high—two qualities of no small request in this favoured region. Dalton's gambling tastes were all originally associated with the turf and its followers; a race in his eyes was the legitimate subject of a bet; and if anything else could rival it in interest, it was some piece of personal prowess or skill, some manly game of strength or activity. To men of this stamp the wager is merely a pledge to record the sentiments they entertain upon a particular event. It is not, as gamesters understand it, the whole sum and substance of the interest. Personal pride, the vain glory of success, is the triumph in one case; in the other, there is no question of anything save gain. To this difference may be traced the wide disparity of feeling exhibited by both in moments of failing fortune. To one, loss comes with all the harassing sensations of defeat: wounded self-esteem, and baffled hope, giving poignancy to the failure. To the other, it is a pure question of a moneyed forfeiture, unaccompanied with a single thought that can hurt the pride of the player. Hence the wild transports of passion in the one case, and the calm, cold self-possession in the other.

We need scarcely say to which class Dalton belonged; indeed, so far as the public play at Baden was concerned, it was the notoriety that pleased him most. The invariable falling back to make way for him as he came up; the murmur of his name as he passed on; the comments on what he would probably do; and, not least of all, the buzz of ad-

miring astonishment that was sure to arise as he plumped down before him the great canvas bag, full of gold, which the Banker's porter had just handed him!

All the little courtesies of the Croupiers, those little official flatteries which mean so much and so little, were especially reserved for *him*; and the unlucky player, who watched his solitary Napoleons "raked in" by a yawning, listless Croupier, became suddenly aware, by the increased alacrity of look around him, that a higher interest was awakened as Peter drew nigh.

The "Count's" chair was ostentatiously placed next the Banker's; a store of cards to mark the chances laid before him; the grave Croupier—he looked like an Archdeacon—passed his gold snuff-box across the table; the smartly-wigged and waiscoated one at his side presented the cards to cut, with some whispered remark that was sure to make Dalton laugh heartily. The sensation of this *entrée* was certain to last some minutes; and even the impatience of the players to resume the game, was a tribute that Dalton accepted as complimentary to the bustle of his approach.

In accordance with the popular superstition of the play-table, Dalton's luck was an overmatch for all the skill of more accomplished gamblers; knowing nothing whatever of the game, only aware when he had won or lost, by seeing that his stake had doubled or disappeared, he was an immense winner. Night after night the same fortune attended him, and so unerringly seemed all his calculations made, that the very caprices of his play looked like well-studied and deep combinations. If many of the bystanders were disposed to this opinion, the "Bankers" thought otherwise; they knew that, in the end, the hour of retribution must come, and, through all their losses, not only observed every mark of courteous deference towards him, but by many a bland smile, and many a polite gesture, seemed to intimate the pleasure they felt in his good fortune. This was all that was wanting to fill up the measure of Dalton's delight.

"There isn't a bit of envy or bad feeling about them chaps," he would often say; "whether I carry away forty Naps or four hundred of a night, they're just as civil. Faix! he knew many a born gentleman might take a lesson from them."

So long as he continued to win, Dalton felt comparatively little interest in play, beyond the notice his presence and his large stakes were sure to excite. As a game, it possessed no hold upon him; and when he had changed his heaps of glittering gold for notes, he arose to leave the table, and to forget all that had occurred there as matters of no possible interest to remember.

Such was no longer the case when fortune turned! Then, and for the first time, the gambler's passion awoke in his heart, and the sting of defeat sent its pangs through him. The prying, searching looks of the bystanders, too, were a dreadful ordeal; for all were curious to see how he bore his losses, and Dalton was no accomplished gamester who could lose with all the impassive gravity of seeming indifference. Still less was he gifted with that philosophy of the play-table, that teaches a timely retreat before adverse fortune; he knew nothing of those sage maxims by which the regular gambler controls his temper and regulates his conduct; nor had he learned the art by which good and sterling qualities, the gifts of noble natures, can be brought into the service of a low and degrading vice! Dalton, it must be owned, was what is called "a bad loser"—that is, he lost his temper with his money; and the more steadily luck seemed against him, the more determinedly did he "back his fortune." Now doubling, now trebling his stake, he lost considerable sums, till at last, as the hand of the clock stood within a few minutes of the closing hour, he emptied the remainder of his bag upon the table, and, without counting, set it all upon a card.

"Rouge perd et couleur!" cried the Banker, and raked in the glittering heap, and, amid a murmur of half-compassionate astonishment, Peter arose from the table. Mrs. Ricketts and her suite were all in the ball-room, but Dalton only remembered them when he had gained the open air. The terrible shock of his reverse had overwhelmed all his faculties, and almost stunned him to unconsciousness. At last, he bethought him of his guests; but it was some time before he could summon sufficient composure of look to go in search of them. He had been so accustomed—to use his own phrase—"to ride the winner," that he didn't know how to face the company as a beaten man. He thought of all the glances of impertinent pity his presence would call forth, and imagined the buzz of remark and comment every line of his features would give rise to. Poor Peter!—little knew he that such signs of sympathy are never given to the very saddest of misfortunes, and that, in such a society, no one wastes a thought upon his neighbour's reverses, except when they serve as a guide to himself.

He did, indeed, overhear from time to time little broken sentences like these: "The old fellow with the white moustache has had a squeeze 'to-night.'" "He caught it heavy and thick." "Must have lost close on a thousand Naps." "Bank walked into him;" and so on—comments as free from any tone of sympathy as the proudest heart could possibly have asked for. But even these were easier to bear than the little playful cajoleries of Mrs. Ricketts on his supposed successes.

Knowing him to be a frequent winner, and hearing from Scroope the large sums he occasionally carried away, she invariably accosted him with some little jesting rebuke on his "dreadful luck"—that "wicked good fortune"—that would follow him in everything and everywhere.

Purvis had been a close spectator of all that went on, this unlucky evening, and was actually occupied with his pencil in calculating the losses when Peter entered the room.

"He had above eighteen or twenty bank notes of a th—thousand francs," cried he, "when he be—be—began the evening. They are all gone now! He played at least a dozen 'rouleaux' of fifty Naps; and as to the bag, I can m—make no guess how m—m—much it held."

"I'll tell you then, Sir," said Peter, good-humouredly, as he just overheard the last remark. "The bag held three hundred and eighty Napoleons; and as you're pretty correct in the other items, you'll not be far from the mark by adding about fifty or sixty Naps for little bets here and there."

"What coolness—what stoical indifference," whispered Mrs. Ricketts to Martha, but loud enough for Dalton to hear. "That is so perfectly Irish; they can be as impetuous as the Italian, and possess all the self-restraint and impassive bearing of the Indian warrior."

"But w—w—why did you go on, when luck was a—a—gainst you?"

"Who told me it was against me 'till I lost all my money?" cried Dalton. "If the first reverse was to make a man feel beat, it would be a very cowardly world, Mr. Purvis."

"Intensely Irish!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"Well, maybe it is," broke in Peter, who was not in a mood to accept anything in a complimentary sense. "Irish it may be; and as you remarked a minute ago, we're little better than savages——"

"Oh, Mr. Dalton—dear Mr. Dalton."

"No matter; I'm not angry, Ma'am. The newspapers says as bad—ay, worse, every day of the week. But what I'm observing is, that the man that could teach me how to keep my money, could never have taught me how to win it. You know the old proverb about the 'faint heart,' Mr. Purvis?"

"Yes; but I—I—I don't want a f—f—fair Lady!"

"Faix! I believe you're right there, my little chap," said Peter, laughing heartily, and at once recovering all his wonted good-humour at the sound of his own mellow-toned mirth; and in this pleasant mood he gave an arm to each of his fair companions, and led them into the supper-room. There was an ostentatious desire for display in the order Dalton gave that evening to the waiter. It seemed as if he wished to appear perfectly indifferent about his losses. The table was covered

with a costly profusion that attracted general notice. Wines of the rarest and most precious vintages stood on the sideboard. Dalton did the honours with even more than his accustomed gaiety. There was a stimulant in that place at the head of the table—there was some magical influence in the duty of Host that never failed with him. The sense of sway and power that ambitious minds feel in high and pre-eminent stations were all his, as he sat at the top of his board; and it must be owned, that with many faults of manner, and many short-comings on the score of taste, yet Peter did the honours of his table well and gracefully.

Certain is it Mrs. Ricketts and her friends thought so. Zoe was in perfect ecstasies at the readiness of his repartees, and the endless variety of his anecdotes. He reminded her at once of Sheridan and "poor dear Mirabeau," and various other "beaux esprits" she used to live with. Martha listened to him with sincere pleasure. Purvis grew very tipsy in the process of his admiration, and the old General, suddenly brought back to life and memory, under the influence of champagne, thought him so like Jack Trevor, of the Engineers, that he blubbered out, "I think I'm listening to Jack. It's poor Trevor over again!"

Was it any wonder if in such intoxications Peter forgot all his late reverses, nor ever remembered them till he had wished his company good night, and found himself alone in his own chamber. Pecuniary difficulties were no new thing to Dalton, and it would not have interfered with his pleasant dreams that night had the question been one of those ordinary demands which he well knew how to resist or evade by many a legal sleight and many an illegal artifice, but here was a debt of honour; he had given his name, three or four times during the evening, for large sums, lost on the very instant they were borrowed! These must be repaid on the next day; but how, he knew not. How he "stood" in Abel Kraus's books he had not the remotest idea. It might be with a balance, or it might be with a deficit. All he really knew was, that he had latterly drawn largely, and spent freely; and, as Abel always smiled and seemed satisfied, Peter concluded that his affairs needed no surer nor safer evidences of prosperity. To have examined ledgers and day-books with such palpable proofs of solvency, would have been, in his eyes, an act of as great absurdity as that of a man who would not believe in the sunshine till he had first consulted the thermometer!

"I must see Abel early to-morrow. Abel will set it all right," were the conclusions to which he always came back; and if not very clearly evident how, why, or by what means, still he was quite satisfied that honest Kraus would extricate him from every difficulty. "The Devil go with it for Black and Red," said he, as he lay down in his bed. "I'd have

plenty of cash in my pocket for everything this night, if it wasn't for that same table; and an ugly game it is as ever a man played. Shuffle and cut; faites, your 'jeu;' thirty-four—thirty-three; red wins—black loses; there's the whole of it; sorrow more on't, except the girl heart that comes afterwards!" these last words he uttered with a deep sigh, and then turned his face to the pillow.

He passed a restless, feverish night; the sleep being more harassing than even his waking moments, disturbed as it was by thoughts of all he had lately gone through. All the tremendous excitement of the play-table, heightened by the effect of wine, made up a wild, chaotic confusion in his brain, that was almost madness. He awoke repeatedly, too, eager for daylight, and the time to call upon honest Abel. At these times he would pace his room up and down, framing the speeches by which he meant to open the interview. Kraus was familiar with his usual "plea." With Ireland and her stereotyped distresses he was thoroughly conversant. Famine, fever, potato-rot, poor-rates, emigration, and eviction, were themes he could have almost discussed himself; but all he recognised in them was an urgent demand for money, and an occasion for driving the very hardest of bargains. The Russian remittances had been less regular of late; so at least Abel averred, for Dalton neither knew, nor tried to know, any details. The dates were frequently inconvenient, and the places of payment oftentimes remote. Still, Abel was civil,—nay, almost cordial; and what can any man ask for more than a smile from his Banker!

Dalton was quite at ease on one point, Kraus was sure to know nothing of his late losses at play; in fact, out of his little den wherein he sat he seemed to be aware of nothing in the whole wide world. A small "slip," which arrived each morning from Frankfort, told him the current exchanges of the day. The faces of his clients revealed all the rest. But Dalton was greatly deceived on this point. There was not the slightest incident of Baden with which he was not familiar, nor any occurrence in its life of dissipation on which he was uninformed. His knowledge was not the offspring of any taste for scandal, or any liking for the secret gossiping of society. No; his was a purely practical and professional information. The Archduke, who had lost so heavily at "roulette," would need a loan on the morrow; the Count, who was about to elope with the Marchioness, must have bills on Paris; the Colonel, who had shot the Baron in a duel, couldn't escape over the frontier without money. In a word, every vice and iniquity seemed the tributaries of his trade; and whether to consummate their wickedness, or escape its penalty, men must first come to Abel Kraus!

To see him crouching behind his little desk, poring over the scattered

fragments of dirty papers, which were his only books, you would never have suspected that he had a thought above the mystic calculations before him. Watch him more narrowly, however, and you will perceive that not a figure can cross the street and approach his door without meeting a shrewd, quick glance from those dark eyes; while a faint muttering sound betrays his detection of the visitor's object.

Long, then, before Dalton swaggered up to the money-changer's den, Abel knew every circumstance of the previous night, and had actually before him on his desk a correct account of all the sums he had lost at play. Abel was not unprepared for such tidings. Dalton was precisely the man to rush headlong into play the moment fortune turned with him, and the pang of defeat was added to the bitterness of a loss, Abel only wondered that the reverse had not come earlier; and so he mumbled below his breath, as, with his hat set jauntily on one side, and his hands stuck carelessly beneath his coat-tails, Dalton came forward.

Peter had so far "got up" his air of easy indifference as to whistle a tune, but, somehow, as he drew nearer to the door, the sounds waxed fainter and fainter, and, before he had crossed the threshold, had sunk away into the cadence of a heavy sigh. Abel never looked up as the other entered, but, affecting the deepest pre-occupation, went on with his figures.

"Morrow, Abel," said Dalton, as he threw himself into a chair, and, removing his hat, began to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief. "This is a murdering hot day. It's not ten yet, and the sun's roasting!"

"Fine weather for de harvest, Herr von Dalton, but a leetle rain do no harm."

"Faix, I think not—neither to man nor beast!"

Abel grinned at the brawny throat and massive proportions that seemed so unequal to sustain the heat, but said nothing.

"How's the exchange, Abel?" said Peter—"how's the exchange?"

Now, in justice to our worthy friend Dalton, we must own that he put this question without having the very remotest idea of its meaning. An inscription from the tomb of the Pharaohs would have been to the full as intelligible to him as an extract from the "City Article." He asked it as certain "Charming Women" inquire about the compass on board ship—a something, in fact, suitable to the time and place, and proper to be done on like occasions.

"De Exchange is very uncertain; de market is up and down," said Abel, dryly.

"That's bad," said Dalton, gravely—"that's very bad!"

"De Mongolian loan is de reason," rejoined Abel.

Dalton gave a grunt, that might mean assent or displeasure with that view of the case, but did not trust himself with more.

"Dey will not take de scrip at eighty-two, and I tink dey are right."

"Faix, I don't doubt but they are!" chimed in Peter.

"Dey are right, if all be true we hear of de security. It is de mines of de State dat are hypotheked—how you call it—what you say, 'hypotheked?'"

Dalton was completely puzzled now, and could only scratch his ear—his invariable symptom of utter discomfiture.

"'Tis no matter," cried Abel, with a grating, harsh laugh. "Dey promise, and no pay; and dat is very bad—ha! ha! ha!"

Now Dalton joined in the laugh, but with as ill a grace as need be.

"Dey promise, and dey no pay, Herr von Dalton!" repeated the Jew, with another laugh, as though he could not tear himself away from so excellent a jest. "Dey borrow, dat dey may make explorations—how you call dem?—wit oder men's money. If dey do win, well! if dey lose—bah! dey are Bankrupt!"

Now all these allusions were of the most provoking character to poor Dalton, who could not help feeling a very different sympathy for the Mongolians from that expressed by Abel Kraus. "Who knows what difficulties they're in—may be they'd pay if they could," muttered he, as he slapped his boot with his cane, and fell into a musing fit.

"Dey shall not have one kreutzer of my monies; I can tell dem dat!" said Kraus, as he buttoned up the keys of his strong box, as though suiting the action to his words.

"Don't put up the keys so soon, Abel," said Dalton, with an effort at a laugh. "I want to see the inside of that little iron trunk there."

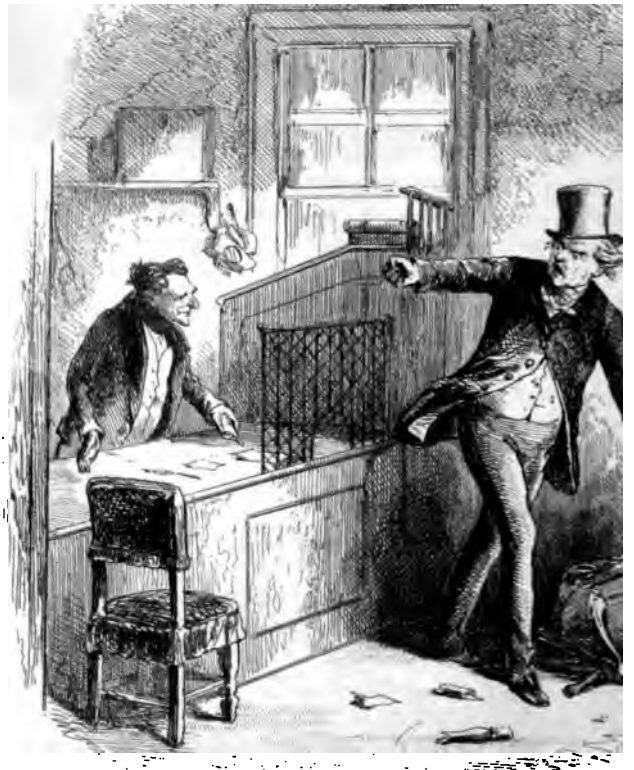
"You no want money, Herr von Dalton?" exclaimed the other in amazement. "You no want money! You draw eight hundred florin on Tuesday; you have four hundred on Wednesday evening, and seven rouleaux of Napoleons; on Saturday again I send you twenty thousand franc!"

"All true—every word of it," said Dalton; "but there's no use telling a hungry man about the elegant dinner he ate last week! The short of the matter is, I want cash now."

Kraus appeared to reflect for a few minutes, and then said, "If a leetle sum will do——"

"Faix! it will not. I want five hundred Naps, at the very least."

Kraus threw down his pen, and stared at him without speaking.



"One would think from your face, Abel, that I was asking for a loan of the National debt. I said five hundred Naps!"

Abel shook his head mournfully, and merely muttered "Ja! ja!" to himself. "We will look over de account, Herr von Dalton," said he at last; "perhaps I am wrong, I no say, I am sure; but I tink—dat is, I believe—you overdraw very much your credit."

"Well, supposing I did; is it the first time?" said Dalton, angrily. "An't I as good a man now as I was before?"

"You are a very goot man, I know well; a very goot and a very pleasant man; but you know de old German proverb, 'Das Gut ist nicht Gelt."

"I never heard it till now," muttered Peter, sulkily; "but if a robber in this country put a pistol to your head, he'd be sure to have a proverb to justify him! But to come to the point: can I have the money?"

"I fear very mush—No!" was the dry response.

"No—is it," cried Dalton, starting up from his seat; "did you say no?"

Kraus nodded twice, slowly and deliberately.

"Then bad luck to the rap ever you'll see more of *my* money," cried Peter, passionately. "You old Jewish thief, I ought to have known you long ago; fifty, sixty, seventy per cent. I was paying for the use of my own cash, and every bill I gave as good as the Bank paper! An't you ashamed of yourself, tell me that—arn't you downright ashamed of yourself?"

"I tink not; I have no occasions for shame," said the other, calmly.

"Faix I believe you there!" retorted Dalton. "Your line of life doesn't offer many opportunities of blushing. But if I can't bring you to know shame, may be I can teach you to feel sorrow. Our dealing is ended from this day out. Peter Dalton doesn't know you more! He never saw you! he never heard of your name! D'ye mind me now? None of your boasting among the English here that you have Mr. Dalton's business. If I hear of your saying it, it's not a contradiction will satisfy me. Understand me well—it's not to leave a mark of friendship that I'll come in here again!"

The fierce tone in which Dalton said these words, and the gesture he made with a tremendous walking-stick, were certainly well calculated to excite Abel's terrors, who, opening a little moveable pane of the window, looked out into the street, to assure himself of succour in case of need.

"What's the use of family, rank, or fortune," cried Dalton, indignantly, as he paced up and down the little shop, in a perfect frenzy of passion, "if a little dirty Jew, with a face like a rat-'tarrier,' can insult

you! My uncle is one of the first men in Austria, and my daughter's a Princess; and there's a creature, you wouldn't touch with the tongs, has the impudence to—to—to——" Evidently the precise offence did not at once occur to Dalton's memory, for, after several efforts to round off his phrase—"to outrage me—to outrage me!" he cried, with the satisfaction of one who had found a missing object.

Meanwhile Abel, who had gradually resumed his courage, was busily engaged in some deep and intricate calculations, frequently referring to a number of ill-scrawled scraps of paper on a file before him, not heeding, if he heard, the storm around him.

"Dere, Saar," said he at length, as he pushed a slip of paper towards Dalton—"dere, Saar; our affairs is closed, as you say. Dere is your debit—eighteen hundred and seventy-tree florins, 'convenzion money.' Dere may be leetle charges to be added for commissions and oder tings; but dat is de chief sum which you pay, now."

There was a sharp emphasis on the last monosyllable that made Dalton start.

"I'll look over it; I'll compare it with my books at home," said he, haughtily, as he stuffed the slip of paper into his waistcoat-pocket.

"Den, you no pay to-day?" asked Abel.

"Nor to-morrow, nor the day after, nor, maybe, a while longer," said Dalton, with a composure he well knew how to feel in like circumstances.

"Very well, den; I will have securities. I will have bail for my monies before tree o'clock this day. Dere is de sommation before de Tribunal, Herr von Dalton." And he handed a printed document, stamped with the official seal of a law court, across the table. "You will see," added the Jew, with a malicious grin, "dat I was not unprepared for all dis. Abel Kraus is only an old Jew, but he no let de Gentile cheat him!"

Dalton was stunned by the suddenness of this attack. The coolly-planned game of the other so overmatched all the passionate outbreak of his own temper, that he felt himself mastered at once by his wily antagonist.

"To the Devil I fling your summons!" cried he, savagely. "I can't even read it."

"Your avocat will explain it all. He will tell you dat if you no pay de monies herein charged, nor give a goot and sufficient surety dereof before de Civils Gericht, dis day, dat you will be consign to de prison of de Staat at Carlsruhe, dere, to remain your 'leben lang,' if so be you never pay."

"Arrest me for debt the day it's demanded!" cried Dalton, whose

notions of the law's delay were not a little shocked by such peremptory proceedings.

"It is in Criminal as well as in Civil Gericht to draw on a Banker beyond your monies, and no pay, on demand."

"There's justice for you!" cried Dalton, passionately. "Highway robbery, housebreaking, is decenter. There's some courage, at least, in *them!* But I wouldn't believe you if you were on your oath. There isn't such a law in Europe, nor in the East 'Ingies!'"

Abel grinned, but never uttered a word.

"So, any ould thief, then, can trump up a charge against a man —can send him off to gaol—before he can look round him!"

"If he do make false charge, he can be condem to de galleys," was the calm reply.

"And what's the use of that?" cried Dalton, in a transport of rage. "Isn't the galleys as good a life as sitting there? Isn't it as manly a thing to strain at an oar as to sweat a guinea?"

"I am a Burgher of the Grand Duchy," said Abel, boldly; "and if you defame me, it shall be before witnesses!" And as he spoke he threw wide the window, so that the passers-by might hear what took place.

Dalton's face became purple; the veins in his forehead swelled like a thick cordage, and he seemed almost bursting with suppressed passion. For an instant it was even doubtful if he could master his struggling wrath. At last he grasped the heavy chair he had been sitting on, and, dashing it down on the ground, broke it into atoms; and then, with an execration in Irish, the very sound of which rang like a curse, he strode out of the shop, and hastened down the street.

Many a group of merry children, many a morning excursionist returning from his donkey-ride, remarked the large old man, who, muttering and gesticulating as he went, strode along the causeway, not heeding nor noticing those around him. Others made way for him as for one it were not safe to obstruct, and none ventured a word as he passed by. On he went, careless of the burning heat and the hot rays of the sun—against which already many a "jalousie" was closed, and many an awning spread—up the main street of the town, across the "Platz," and then took his way up one of the steep and narrow lanes which lead towards the upper town. To see him, nothing could look more purpose-like than his pace and the manner of his going; and yet he knew nothing of where he walked nor whither the path led him. A kind of instinct directed his steps into an old and oft-followed track, but his thoughts were bent on other objects. He neither saw the half-terrified glances that were turned on him, nor marked how they who were washing at the fountain ceased their work, as he passed, to stare at him.

At last he reached the upper town; emerging from which, by a steep flight of narrow stone steps, he gained a little terraced spot of ground, crossed by two rows of linden trees, under whose shade he had often sat of an evening to watch the sunset over the plain. He did not halt here, but passing across the grassy sward, made for a small low house which stood at the angle of the terrace. The shutters of the shop-window were closed, but a low half-door permitted a view of the interior; leaning over which, Dalton remained for several minutes, as if lost in deep reverie.

The silent loneliness of the little shop at first appeared to engross all his attention, but after a while other thoughts came slowly flittering through his muddy faculties, and with a deep-drawn sigh he said,

"Dear me! but I thought we were living here still! It's droll enough how one can forget himself! Hans, Hans Roëckle, my man!" cried he, beating with his stick against the doors as he called out. "Hanser! Hans, I say! Well, it's a fine way to keep a shop! How does the creature know but I'm a lady that would buy half the gimcracks in the place, and he's not to be found! That's what makes these devils so poor—they never mind their business. 'Tis nothing but fun and diversion they think of the whole day long. There's no teaching them that there's nothing like 'Indhustry!' What makes us the finest people under the sun? Work—nothing but work! I'm sure I'm tired telling him so! Hans, are you asleep, Hans Roëckle?" No answer followed this summons, and now Dalton, after some vain efforts to unbolt the door, strode over it into the shop. "Faix! I don't wonder that you hadn't a lively business," said he, as he looked around at the half-stocked shelves, over which dust and cobwebs were spread like a veil. "Sorrow a thing I don't know as well as I do my gaiters! There's the same soldiers, and that's the woodcutter with the matches on his back, and there's the little cart Frank mended for him! Poor Frank, where is he now, I wonder?" Dalton sighed heavily as he continued to run his eye over the various articles all familiar to him long ago. "What's become of Hans," cried he at last, aloud; "if it wasn't an honest place he wouldn't have a stick left! To go away and leave everything at sixes and sevens—well, well, it's wonderful!"

Dalton ascended the stairs—every step of which was well known to him—to the upper story, where he used to live. The door was unfastened, and the rooms were just as he had left them—even to the little table at which Nelly used to sit beside the window. Nothing was changed: a bouquet of faded flowers—the last, perhaps, she had ever plucked in that garden—stood in a glass in the window-sill; and so like was all to the well-remembered past, that Dalton almost thought he heard her footstep on the floor.

"Well, it was a nice little quiet spot any way!" said he, as he sank into a chair, and a heavy tear stole slowly along his cheek. "Maybe it would have been well for me if I never left it! With all our poverty we spent many a pleasant night beside that hearth, and many's the happy day we passed in that wood there. To be sure, we were all together then! that makes a difference! instead of one here, another there, God knows when to meet, if ever!"

"I used to fret many a time about our being so poor, but I was wrong after all, for we divided our troubles amongst us, and that left a small share for each; but there's Nelly now, pining away—I don't know for what—but I see it plain enough; and here am I myself with a heavy heart this day; and sure, who can tell if Kate, great as she is, hasn't her sorrows; and poor Frank, 'tis many a hard things, perhaps, he has to bear. I believe in reality we were better then!"

He arose, and walked about the room; now, stopping before each well-remembered object; now, shaking his head in mournful acquiescence with some unspoken regret; he went in turn through each chamber, and then, passing from the room that had been Nelly's, he descended a little zigzag, rickety stair, by which Hans had contrived to avoid injuring the gnarled branches of a fig-tree that grew beneath. Dalton now found himself in the garden; but how unlike what it had been! Once, the perfection of blooming richness and taste—the beds without a weed, the gravel trimly raked and shining, bright channels of limped water running amid the flowers, and beautiful birds of gay plumage caged beneath the shady shrubs—now, all was overrun with rank grass and tall weeds; the fountains were dried up, the flowers trodden down—even the stately yew hedge, the massive growth of a century, was broken by the depredations of the mountain cattle. All was waste, neglect, and desolation.

"I'd not know the place, it is not like itself," muttered Dalton, sorrowfully. "I never saw the like of this before. There's the elegant fine plants dying for want of care! and the rose-trees rotting just for want of a little water! To think of how he laboured late and early here, and to see it now! He used to call them carnations his children: there was one Agnes, and there was another Undine—indeed, I believe that was a lily; and I think there was a Nelly, too; droll enough to make out they were Christians! but sure, they did as well; and he watched after them as close! and aye, and stranger than all, he'd sit and talk to them for hours. It's a *quare* world altogether; but maybe it's our own fault that it's not better; and perhaps we ought to give in more to each other's notions, and not sneer at whims and fancies when they don't please ourselves."

It was while thus ruminating, Dalton entered a little arbour, whose

trellised walls and roof had been one of the triumphs of Hanserl's skill. Ruin, however, had now fallen on it, and the drooping branches and straggling tendrils hung mournfully down on all sides, covering the stone-table, and even the floor, with their vegetation. As Dalton stood, sad and sorrow-struck at this desolation, he perceived the figure of Hans himself, as, half-hidden by the leaves, he sat in his accustomed seat. His head was uncovered, but his hair fell in great masses on either side, and with his long beard, now neglected and untrimmed, gave him an unusually wild and savage look. A book lay open on his knees, but his hands were crossed over it, and his eyes were upturned as if in reverie.

Dalton felt half-ashamed at accosting him; there was something ungracious in the way he had quitted the poor Dwarf's dwelling; there had been a degree of estrangement for weeks before between them, and moreover he knew that he had ill-requited all the unselfish kindness of the little toy-seller: so that he would gladly have retired without being noticed, when Hans suddenly turned, and saw him.

It was almost with a cry of surprise Hans called out his name.

"This is kind of you, Herr von Dalton. Is the Fräulein——" He stopped and looked eagerly around.

"No Hanserl," said Dalton, answering to the half-expressed question. "Nelly isn't with me; I came up alone. Indeed, to tell the truth, I found myself here without well knowing why or how. Old habit, I suppose, led me, for I was thinking of something else."

"They were kind thoughts that guided your steps," said the Dwarf, [illegible] of deep gratitude, "for I have been lonely of late."

"Why don't you come down and see us, Hanserl? It's not so far [illegible] you know Nelly is always glad to see you."

"It's true," said the Dwarf, mournfully.

"You were always a good friend to us, Hanserl," said Dalton, taking [illegible] hand and pressing it cordially; "and faix, as the world goes," [illegible] sighing, "there's many a thing easier found than a friend."

"The rich can have all—even friendship," muttered Hans, lowly.

"I don't know that, Hans: I'm not so sure you're right there."

"They buy it," said the Dwarf, with a fierce energy, "as they can [illegible] everything—the pearl for which the diver hazards life—the gem that [illegible] has grown blind over—the fur for which the hunter has [illegible] heart's blood. And yet when they've got them they have not [illegible]."

"[illegible] that's true," sighed Dalton. "I suppose nobody is satisfied in this world."

"But they can be if they will but look upward," cried Hans, enthusiastically. "If they will learn to think humbly of themselves, and on how

slight a claim they possess all the blessings of their lot—if they will but bethink them that the sun and the flowers, the ever-rolling sea, and the leafy forest, are all their inheritance—that for them, as for all, the organ peals through the dim-vaulted aisle with promises of eternal happiness; and lastly, that, with all the wild contentions of men's passions, there is ever gushing up, in the human heart, a well of kind and affectionate thoughts—like those springs we read of, of pure water amid the salt ocean, and which, taken at the source, are sweet and good to drink from. Men are not so bad by nature; it is the prizes for which they struggle; the goals they strive for, corrupt them! Make of this fair earth a gambling-table, and you will have all the base passions of the gamester around it."

"Bad luck to it for gambling," said Dalton, whose intelligence was just able to grasp at the illustration; "I wish I'd never seen a card; and that reminds me, Hans, that maybe you'd give me a bit of advice. There was a run against me last night in that thieving place. The 'red came up fourteen times, and I, backing against it every time, sometimes ten, sometimes twenty—ay, faix, as high as fifty 'Naps.' You may think what a squeeze I got! And when I went to ould Kraus this morning, this is what he sticks in my hand instead of a roll of bank-notes." With these words Dalton presented to Hans the printed summons of the "Tribunal."

"A Gerichts-Ruf!" said Hans, with a voice of deep reverence, for he entertained a most German terror for the law and its authority. "This is a serious affair."

"I suppose it is," sighed Dalton; "but I hope we're in a Christian country, where the law is open?"

Hans nodded, and Peter went on.

"What I mean is, that nothing can be done in a hurry—that when we have a man on our side he can oppose and obstruct, and give delays, picking a hole here and finding a flaw there; asking for vouchers for this and proofs for that, and then waiting for witnesses that never come, and looking for papers that never existed; making Chancery of it, Hans, my boy—making Chancery of it."

"Not here—not with us!" said Hans, gravely. "You must answer to this charge to-day, and before four o'clock, too, or to-morrow there will be a writ of 'contumacy' against you. You havn't got the money?"

"Of course I havn't, nor a ten pound note towards it."

"Then you must provide security."

"'Tis easy said, my little man, but it is not so easy dealing with human beings as with the little wooden figures in your shop beyond."

"There must be 'good and substantial bail,' as the summons declares:

such as will satisfy the court," said Hans, who seemed at once to have become a man of acute worldly perception at sight of this printed document.

"Security—bail!" exclaimed Dalton. "You might as well ask Robinson Crusoe who'd be Godfather to his child on the Desert Island. There's not a man, woman, or child in the place would give me a meal's meat. There's not a house I could shelter my head in, for one night; and see now," cried he, carried away by an impulse of passionate excitement, "it isn't by way of disparagement I say it to this little town, for the world all over is the same; the more you give the less you get! Treat them with champagne and venison; send money to this one, make presents to that, and the day luck turns with you, the best word they'll have for you is, 'He was a wasteful careless Devil—couldn't keep it when he had it—lived always above his means—all hand and mouth.' It's a kind friend that will vouchsafe as much as 'Poor fellow—I'm sorry for him!'"

"And to what end is wealth," cried Hans, boldly, "if it but conduce to this? Are the friends well chosen who can behave thus? Are the hospitalities well bestowed that meet such return? or is it not rather selfishness is paid back in the same base coin that it uttered?"

"For the matter of that," said Dalton, angrily, "I never found that vulgar people was a bit more grateful than their betters: nor low manners any warrantry for high principles; and when one is to be shipwrecked, it's better to go down in a 'seventy-four' than be drowned out of a punt, in a mill-pond."

"It's past noon already," said Hans, pointing to the sun-dial on his house. "There's little time to be lost."

"And as little to be gained," muttered Dalton, moodily, as he strolled out into the garden.

"Let me have this paper," said Hans; "I will see the Herr Kraus myself, and try if something cannot be done. With time, I suppose, you could meet this claim?"

"To be sure I could, when my remittances arrive—when my instalments are paid up—when my rents come in—when——" He was about to add, "when luck changes," but he stopped himself just in time.

"There need be no difficulty if you can be certain," said Hans, slowly.

"Certain!—and of what is a man certain in this life?" said Dalton, in his tone of moralising. "Wasn't I certain of the Corrigoneal estate? Wasn't I certain of Miles Dalton's property in the funds? Wasn't I certain that if the Parliament wasn't taken away from us, that I'd have my own price for the Borough of Knocknascanelera?—and

sorrow one of the three ever came to me. Aye, no later than last night, wasn't I certain that Black would come up——"

"When I said certain," broke in Hans, "I meant so far as human foresight could pledge itself; but I did not speak of the chances of the play-table. If your expectations of payment rest on these, do not talk of them as certainties."

"What's my estates for? Where's my landed property?" cried Dalton, indignantly. "To hear you talk, one would think I was a Chevalier of Industhry, as they call them."

"I ask your pardon, Herr," said Hans, humbly. "It is in no spirit of idle curiosity that I speak; less still, with any wish to offend you. I will now see what is best to do. You may leave all in my hands, and by four o'clock, or five at furthest, you shall hear from me."

"That's sensible—that's friendly," cried Dalton, shaking the other's hand warmly, and really feeling the most sincere gratitude for the kindness.

If there was any act of friendship he particularly prized, it was the intervention that should relieve him of the anxiety and trouble of a difficult negotiation, and leave him, thoughtless and careless, to stroll about, neither thinking of the present nor uneasy for the future. The moment such an office had devolved upon another, Dalton felt relieved of all sense of responsibility before his own conscience; and, although the question at issue were his own welfare or ruin, he ceased to think of it as a personal matter. Like his countryman, who consoled himself when the house was in flames, by thinking, "he was only a lodger," so he actually forgot his own share of peril by reflecting on the other interests that were at stake. And the same theory that taught him to leave his soul to his Priest's care, and his health to his Doctor's, made him quite satisfied when a friend had charge of his honour or his fortune.

It was as comfortable a kind of fatalism as need be; and, assuredly, to have seen Peter's face as he now descended the steps to the lower town, it would be rash to deny that he was not a sincere believer in his philosophy. No longer absent in air, and clouded in look, he had a smile and a pleasant word for all who passed him; and now, with a jest for this one, and "a kreutzer" for that, he held on his way, with a tail of beggars and children after him, all attracted by that singular mesmerism which draws around certain men everything that is vagrant and idle—from the cripple at the crossing to the half-starved cur-dog without an owner.

This gift was, indeed, his; and whatever was penniless, and friendless, and houseless, seemed to feel they had a claim on Peter Dalton.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST STAKE OF ALL.

Dalton found his little household on the alert at his return home; for Mrs. Rackett had just received an express to inform her that her "two dearest friends on earth" were to arrive that evening in Baden, and she was busily engaged in arranging a little *fête* for their reception. All that poor Nelly knew of the expected guests was, that one was a distinguished soldier and the other a no less illustrious diplomatist; claims which, for the reader's illumination, we beg to remark, were embodied in the persons of Colonel Haggerstone and Mr. Foglass. Most persons in Mrs. Rackett's position would have entertained some scruples about introducing a reinforcement to the already strong garrison of the villa, and would have been disposed to the more humble but safe policy enshrined in the adage of "letting well alone." But she had a spirit far above such small ambitions, and saw that the Dalton hospitalities were capable of what, in parliamentary phrase, is called a "most extended application."

By the awe-struck air of Nelly, and the overweening delight manifested by her father, Zoe perceived the imposing effect of great names upon both, and so successfully did she mystify the description of her two [illegible] friends, that an uninterested listener might readily have set them down for the Duke and Prince Metternich, unless, indeed, that the praises she lavished on them would have seemed even excessive for such greatness. A triumphal arch was erected half-way up the avenue, over which, in flowery initials, were to be seen the letters "B." and "P.," symbols to represent "Bayard" and "Puffendorf;" under which guise Haggarstone and the Consul were to be represented. Strings of coloured lamps were to be festooned along the approach, over which an Irish harp was to be exhibited in a transparency, with the very original inscription of "Caed Mille failtha," in Celtic letters beneath.

The Banquet—the word dinner was strictly proscribed for that day—was to be arrayed in the hall, where Dalton was to preside, if possible, with an Irish crown upon his head, supported by Nelly as the Genius of Irish Music; and Zoe herself in a composite character—half Empress, half Prophetess—a something between Sappho and the Queen of Sheba: Martha, for the convenience of her various household cares, was to be costumed as a Tyrolese hostess; and Purvis, in a dress of flesh-coloured web, was to represent Mercury, sent on purpose from above to deliver a

message of welcome to the arriving guests. As for the General, there was a great doubt whether he ought to be Bellisarius or Suwarroff—for being nearly as blind as the one and as deaf as the other—his qualifications were about evenly balanced.

If not insensible to some of the absurdities of this notable project, Dalton forgot the ridicule in the pleasanter occupation of the bustle, the movement, and the tumult it occasioned. It did his heart good to see the lavish waste and profusion that went forward. The kitchen-table, as it lay spread with fruit, fish, and game, might have made a study for "Schneiders;" and honest Peter's face glowed with delight as he surveyed a scene so suggestive of convivial thoughts and dissipation.

"No doubt of it, Nelly," said he, "but Mother Ricketts has grand notions! She does the thing like a Princess!" The praise was so far well bestowed, that there was something Royal in dispensing hospitality without regarding the cost; while, at the same time, she never entertained the slightest sentiment of esteem for those in whose favour it was to be exercised. Among the very few things she feared in this world was Haggerstone's "tongue," which she herself averred was best conciliated by "giving occupation to his teeth." The Banquet was "got up," with that object, while it also gave a favourable opportunity of assuming that unbounded sway in Dalton's household which should set the question of her supremacy at rest for ever.

To this end was poor Martha engaged with puff-paste, and jellies, and whip cream, with wreaths of roses and pyramids of fruit, from dawn till dusk. To this end was Purvis nearly driven out of his mind by endeavouring to get off by heart an address in rhyme, the very first line of which almost carried him off in a fit of coughing—the word Puffendorf being found nearly as unmanageable to voice as it was unsuited to verse. While poor Bellisarius, stripped of rule and compass, denied access to water-colours, Indian-ink, or charcoal, spent a most woeful day of weary expectancy.

It was, indeed, an awful scene of trouble, fatigue, and exertion on every side, adding one more to those million instances where the preparation for the guest has no possible relation to the degree of esteem he is held in. For so is it in the world: our best receptions are decreed to those we care least for; "our friend" is condemned to the family dinner, while we lavish our fortune on mere acquaintances. In these days the fatted calf would not have been killed to commemorate the return of the prodigal, but have been melted down into mock-turtle, to feast "my Lord" or "your Grace."

The day wore on, and as the arrangements drew nearer to completion, the anxieties were turned towards the guests themselves, who were

[illegible] at five o'clock. It was now six, and yet no sign of their coming! Fully a dozen times had Mrs. Ricketts called Martha from some household cares, by the adjuration, "Sister Anne, sister Anne, [illegible] coming?" Mercury had twice ventured out on the [illegible], from which he was driven back by a posse of hooting and laughing children, and Dalton himself paced up and down the terrace in a state of nervous impatience, not a little stimulated by hunger, and certain frying visits he paid the iced punch, to see if it "was keeping cool."

There is, assuredly, little mesmeric relation between the expecting host and the lingering guest, or we should not witness all that we do of our friend's unpunctuality in this life. What a want of sympathy between the feverish impatience of the one and the careless dalliance of the other! Not that we intend this censure to apply to the case before us; for Haggerstone had not the very remotest conception of the honours that awaited him, and jogged along his dusty road with no greater desire to be at the end of the journey than was fairly justifiable in one who travelled with German post-horses and Foglass for a companion!

Six o'clock came, and, after another hour of fretful anxiety, it struck seven. By this time beef had become carbon, and fowls were like [illegible], the fish was reduced to the state of a "purée," while [illegible] to assume the flinty resistance of ice was calmly settling down into a fluid existence. Many an architectural device of poor Martha's genius was doomed to the fate of her other "castles," and [illegible] of skilful shape dropped off one by one, like the [illegible]. All the telegraphic announcements from the [illegible] were of disasters, but Mrs. Ricketts received the tidings with a [illegible], and it was only when warned by the gathering [illegible] Dalton's brow that she thought it wiser to "give in."

[illegible] had, however, a different source from that which she suspected. It proceeded from the quiet but steady importunity with which [illegible] paced up and down before the door, now, appearing before [illegible], now, before another, totally insensible to the cold [illegible] of Dalton's looks, and evidently bent on paying no [illegible] to all the signs and signals intended for his guidance.

"Does [illegible] company in the house? Hasn't the little creature [illegible] that this is no time to be bothering and teasing about [illegible]? Has he no decency? Has he no respect for his superiors?" Such [illegible] with which Dalton tried to "blow off the steam" of his indignation, while, with many a gesture and motion he intimated his anger and impatience. "Faix, he's like a bailiff out there," cried

he at last, as he issued forth to meet him. Whatever might have been the first angry impulses of his heart, his second thoughts were far more gentle and well-disposed as he drew near to Hanserl, who stood, cap in hand, in an attitude of deep and respectful attention.

"They have accepted the bail, Herr von Dalton, and this bond needs but your signature," said Hans, mildly, as he held forth a paper towards him.

"Who's the bail? Give me the bond," said Dalton, rapidly; and not waiting for the answer to his question, "where's the name to be, Hanserl?"

"Here, in this space," said the Dwarf, dryly.

"That's soon done, if there's no more wanting," rejoined Peter, with a laugh. "'Tis seldom that writing the same two words cost me so little! Won't you step in, a minute, into the house? I'd ask you to stop and eat your dinner, but I know you don't like strangers, and we have company to-day. Well, well, no offence—another time, maybe, when we're alone! He's as proud as the Devil, that little chap," muttered he, as he turned back within the house; "I never saw one of his kind that wasn't. 'Tis only creatures with humpbacks and bent shins that never believes they can be wrong in this world; they have a conceit in themselves that's wonderful! Not that there isn't good in him, too—he's a friendly soul as ever I seen! There it is now. Peter Dalton's hand and deed;" and he surveyed the superscription with considerable satisfaction. "There it is, Hans, and much good may it do you!" said he, as he delivered the document with an air of a Prince conferring a favour on a subject.

"You will bear in mind that Abel Kraus is a hard creditor!" said Hans, who could not help feeling shocked at the easy indifference Dalton exhibited.

"Well, but havn't we settled with him?" cried Peter, half impatiently.

"So far as surety for his claim goes——"

"Yes, that's what I mean—he's sure of his money—that's all he wants. I'd be the well-off man to-day if *I* was sure of getting back all ever I lent! But nobody does, and, what's more, nobody expects it."

"This bond expires in twelve days," added Hans, more than commonly anxious to suggest some prudential thoughts.

"Twelve days!" exclaimed Peter, who, instead of feeling alarmed at the shortness of the period, regarded it as so many centuries. "Many's the change one sees in the world in twelve days. Wouldn't you take something—a glass of Marcobrunner, or a little plain Nantz?"

Hans made no reply, for with bent-down head, and hands crossed on his bosom, he was deep in thought.

"I'm saying, that maybe you'd drink a glass of wine, Hans?" re-

peated Dalton, but still no answer came. "What dreamy creatures them Germans are," muttered Peter.

"And then," exclaimed Hanserl, as if speaking to himself, "it is but beginning life anew. Good-by—farewell." And so saying, he touched his cap courteously, and moved hastily away, while Dalton continued to look after him with a compassionate sorrow, for one so little capable of directing his path in life. As he re-entered the house, he found that Mrs. Ricketts, abandoning all hope of her distinguished guests, had just ordered the dinner; and honest Peter consoled himself for their absence by observing, that they should be twice as jolly by themselves! Had it depended on himself alone, the sentiment might have had some foundation, for there was something of almost wild gaiety in his manner. All the vicissitudes of the morning, the painful alternations of hope and fear, —hope, so faint as to be a torture, and fear, so dark as to be almost despair—had worked him up to a state of extreme excitement.

To add to this, he drank deeply, quaffing off whole goblets of wine, and seeming to exult in the mad whirlwind of his own reckless jollity. If the jests he uttered on Scroope's costume, or the other allegorical fancies of Zoe's brain, were not of the most refined taste, they were at least heartily applauded by the indulgent public around his board. Mrs. Ricketts was in perfect ecstasies at the flashes of his "Irish wit;" and even Martha, fain to take on credit what was so worthily endorsed, laughed her own meek laugh of approval. As for Purvis, champagne completed what nature had but begun, and he became perfectly unintelligible ere dinner was over.

All this while poor Nelly's sufferings were extreme; she saw the unblushing, shameless adulation of the parasites, and she saw, too, the more than commonly excited glare in her father's eyes—the wildness of fever rather than the passing excitation of wine. In vain, her imploring, beseeching glances were turned towards him; in vain, she sought, by all her little devices, to withdraw him from the scene of riotous debauch, or recal him from the excesses of a revel which was an orgie. In his wild and boastful vein, he raved about "Home," as he still called it, and of his family possessions—at times, vaunting of his wealth and greatness, and then, as suddenly breaking into mad invectives against the Jews and money-lenders, to whom his necessities had reduced him.

"A good run of luck over there!" cried he, frantically, and pointing to the blaze of lamps which now sparkled through the trees before the Cursaal. "One good night yonder, and Peter Dalton will defy the world. If you're a lucky hand, Miss Martha, come over and bet for me. I'll make the bank jump for it before I go to bed! I know the secret of it, now. It's changing from colour to colour ruins everybody. You

must be steady to one—black or red, whichever it is; stick fast to it. You lose two, three, maybe six or seven times running; never mind, go on still. 'Tis the same with play as with women, as the old song says:

> If they're coy and won't hear when you say you adore,
> Just squeeze them the tighter and press them the more.

Isn't that it, Mrs. Ricketts? Ah, baithershin! you never knew that song. Miss Martha's blushing; and just for that I'll back 'red' all the evening; and there's the music beginning already. Here's success to us all! and, faix, it's a pleasant way to deserve it."

Nelly drew near him as they were leaving the room, and, passing her arm fondly about him, whispered a few words in his ear.

"And why not this evening?" said he, aloud, and in a rude voice. "Is it Friday that it ought to bring bad luck? Why shouldn't I go this evening? I can't hear you; speak louder. Ha! ha! ha! Listen to that, Miss Martha. There's the sensible Nelly for you! She says she had a dhrame about me last night."

"No, dearest Papa; but that it was like a dream to me. All the narrative seemed so natural—all the events followed so regularly, and yet I was awake just as I am now."

"More shame for you then. We can't help ourselves what nonsense we think in our sleep."

"But you'll not go, dearest Papa. You'll indulge me for this once, and I'll promise never to tease you by such follies again."

"Faix, I'll go, sure enough; and, what's more, I'll win five thousand pounds this night, as sure as my name's Peter. I saw a black cat shaving himself before a new tin saucepan; and if that isn't luck, I'd like to know what is. A black cat won the Curragh Stakes for Tom Molly; and it was an egg saucepan made Doctor Groves gain the twenty thousand pounds in the lottery. And so now may I never leave this room if I'd take two thousand pounds down for my chances to-night!"

And in all the force of this confidence in fortune, Dalton sallied forth to the Cursaal. The rooms were more than usually crowded, and it was with difficulty that, with Mrs. Ricketts on one arm and Martha on the other, he could force his way to the tables. Once there, however, a courteous reception awaited him, and the urbane Croupier moved his own august chair to make room for the honoured guest. Although the company was very numerous, the play was as yet but trifling; a stray gold piece here or there glittered on the board, and in the careless languor of the Bankers, and the unexcited looks of the bystanders might be read the fact that none of the well-known frequenters of the place were betting. Dalton's appearance immediately created a sensation of curiosity. Several of those present had witnessed his losses on the preceding night,

and were eager to see what course he would now pursue. It was remarked that he was not accompanied, as heretofore, by that formidable money-bag which, with ostentatious noise, he used to fling down on the table before him. Nor did he now produce that worn old leather pocket-book, whose bursting clasp could scarce contain the roll of bank notes within it. He sat with his hands crossed before him, staring at the table, but to all seeming not noticing the game. At length, suddenly rousing himself, he leant over and said a few words, in a whisper, to the Croupier, who, in an equally low tone, communicated with his colleague across the table. A nod and a smile gave the quiet reply, and Dalton, taking a piece of paper, scrawled a few figures on it with a pencil, and with a motion so rapid as to be unseen by many of the bystanders, the Banker pushed several "rouleaux" of gold before Dalton, and went on with the game.

Dalton broke one of the envelopes, and as the glittering pieces fell out, he moved his fingers through them, as though their very touch was pleasure. At last, with a kind of nervous impatience, he gathered up a handful, and, without counting, threw them on the table.

"How much?" said the Croupier.

"The whole of it!" cried Dalton: and scarcely had he spoken, when he won.

A murmur of astonishment ran through the room as he suffered the double stake to remain on the board; which speedily grew into a louder hum of voices, as the Banker proceeded to count out the gains of a second victory. Affecting an insight into the game and its chances, which he did not possess, Dalton now hesitated and pondered over his bets, increasing his stake, at one moment, diminishing it, at another, and assuming all the practised airs of old and tried gamblers. As though in obedience to every caprice, the fortune of the game followed him unerringly. If he lost, it was some mere trifle; when he won, the stake was sure to be a large one. At length even this affected prudence—this mock skill—became too slow for him, and he launched out into all his accustomed recklessness. Not waiting to take in his winnings, he threw fresh handfuls of gold amongst them, till the Bank, trembling for its safety, more than once had to reduce the stakes he wished to venture.

"They'd give him five hundred Naps this moment if he'd cease to play," said some one behind Dalton's chair. "There's nothing the Bank dreads so much as a man with courage to back his luck."

"I'd wish them a good night," said another, "if I'd have made so good a thing of it, as that old fellow; he has won some thousand Napoleons, I'm certain."

"*He* knows better than that," said the former. "This is a 'run' with him, and he feels it is. He'll 'break' them before the night's over."

Dalton heard every word of this colloquy, and drank in the surmise as greedily as did Macbeth the Witches' prophecy.

"He deserves to win, too," resumed the last speaker; "for I never saw a man play more boldly."

"So much for boldness," cried the other; "he has just risked a fifth time on the red and lost. See, if it be not two hundred 'Naps.'"

The defeat had not disheartened him, for again Dalton covered the board with gold. As if that moment had been the turning point of his destiny, his losses now began, and with all the rapidity of his previous gains. At first he bore the reverse calmly and patiently; after a while a slight gesture of impatience, a half-muttered exclamation would escape him; but when loss followed loss unceasingly, and one immense stake disappeared after another, Dalton's fingers trembled, and his cheeks shook like one in ague. His straining bloodshot eyes were fixed on the play with the intensity of passion, and a convulsive shudder would shake his massive frame at each new tidings of loss. "Am I never to have luck again? Is it only to lead me on that I won? Can this go on for ever?" were the low muttered words which now he syllabled with difficulty, for already his utterance was thick, and his swollen tongue and flattened cheeks seemed threatened with paralysis.

His last stake was swept away before him, and Dalton, unable to speak, stretched forth his arms across the table to arrest the Banker's hand. "A hundred 'Naps' on the red," cried he, wildly; "no—two hundred—neck or nothing, I'll go five—d'ye hear me?—five hundred on the red!"

A short conversation in whispers ensued between the Croupiers, after which one of them spoke a few words to Dalton in a low voice.

"You never said so when I was losing," cried Peter, savagely. "I heard nothing about the rules of the tables *then*."

"The stake is above our limit, Sir; above the limit laid down by law," said the Chief Banker, mildly.

"I don't care for your laws. I lost my money, and I'll have my revenge."

"You can make half de stakes in my name, Saar," said a long-moustachioed and not over clean-looking personage beside Dalton's chair.

"That will do—thank you," cried Dalton. "Bet two hundred and fifty for me and I'll stake the rest."

[illegible] the low voice of the Croupier proclaimed that [illegible]

"What does he say—why won't he speak plainly?" cried Dalton, in a [illegible] energy.

"[illegible]," muttered the man behind him.

"[illegible] what other luck could I have? Lose—lose—lose!" [illegible] in a low, mourning voice. "There they go—the [illegible] as fresh as ever. Why won't they take warning [illegible] as it has left me. May I never! if the red [illegible] winning every time now!" And, as he spoke, his eyes followed a great heap of gold which some fortunate gambler just drew in before him. "How much did he win, then?" cried Dalton; but none replied to a question so contrary to every etiquette of the table.

"He never counts it," muttered Peter, as he continued to gaze on the lucky player with a kind of envious admiration. "They say it's best not to count one's winnings. I don't know what's best; and I believe 'tis only the Devil knows—for it was he invented the game.—Red, again, the winner."

"Why you no back de red?" whispered the man behind his chair.

Dalton started, and was about to give an angry reply, but corrected himself, and merely stared stupidly at him.

"You win eleven hundred Napoleons if you do go on," said the other, showing in proof of his assertion the card on which he had marked all the chances.

"And where's the money?" cried Dalton, as, with a hissing utterance, he spoke, and pointed to the table before him. "Have I Coutts' Bank at my back, or is all Lombard-street in my pocket? 'Tis easy to say, go on!—Red again, by Jingo!"

"I tell you dat!" said the other, gravely.

Dalton turned round in his chair, and stared steadfastly at the speaker. His mind was in that state of wild confusion, when every conception, however vague and fanciful, assumes a certain degree of reality, and superstitions take on them all the force of warnings. What if his prompter were the Devil himself! was it not exactly what he had often heard of? He never saw him there before, and certainly appearances were not much against the hypothesis. He was tall and spare, with a high narrow forehead, and a pair of most treacherous-looking black eyes, that seemed to let nothing escape their vigilance. Unabashed by, or indifferent to, Dalton's scrutiny, he went on with his chronicle of the game, noting down the chances, and only muttering a few words to himself.

"Nine times red," said he, as he counted the scores.

"Will it go ten?" asked Dalton, with a purposelike energy, that showed his faith in the oracle; but the other never heeded the question.

"Back de red, I say; back de red dis time," whispered he in Dalton's ear.

"Don't you see that I have no money," said Dalton, angrily.

"Dey will lend on your name; ask for a hundred Naps. Be quick, be quick."

Dalton stooped across the table, and whispered the Croupier, who returned a look of doubt and uncertainty. Peter grew more pressing, and the other bent over, and spoke to his colleague. This time the request was not met with a smile and a bland bow, and Dalton watched with angry impatience all the signs of hesitation and deliberation between them.

"Say your banker is closed—that you must have de monies," whispered the dark man.

"Must I wait till the bank is open to-morrow morning?" said Dalton, "or do you mean to give me this trifle?"

"Our rules are strictly opposed to the practice of lending, Count," whispered the Croupier at his side; "we have already transgressed them in your favour, and——"

"Oh, don't inconvenience the Count," interposed his colleague. "How much is it?"

"Say two hundred—two!" muttered the unknown.

"Two hundred Naps," cried Dalton, resolutely.

"This will make five hundred and forty to-night, Count."

"And if it was five thousand," said Peter, running his fingers through the gold with ecstasy, "what matter? There goes fifty on the red."

"Ah, you play too rash," whispered the dark man.

"What business is it of yours? am I your ward?" cried Dalton, passionately, for the stake was lost in the same instant. "Red again, fifty. May I never! if I don't believe 'tis *you* brings me the bad luck," said Dalton, darting a savage glance at the other, whose impassive face never betrayed the slightest emotion.

"I no wish to disturb your game, Saar," was the meek reply of the dark man, and with a bow of meek humility he backed through the crowd and disappeared.

In a moment Dalton felt shocked at his own rudeness, and would have given worlds to have recalled his words, or even apologised for them;

but other thoughts soon supplanted these, and again his whole heart was in the game.

"You didn't bet last time," remarked some one near him, "and your favourite colour won."

"No, I was looking about me. I was thinking of something else," replied he; and he sat fingering the gold pieces as though unwilling to part with them.

The game went on; luck came and went; the gold glittered and clinked; the same endless "refrain"—"Faites votre jeu, Messieurs," followed by the same sing-song phrases, continued to roll on, and Dalton sat, now counting his money, and piling up the pieces into tens or twenties: or, with his head resting on his hand, deep in serious thought. Twice he placed a heavy stake upon the table, and recalled it at the very moment of the game's beginning. Every gesture and action showed the terrible struggle between Hope and Fear that went on within him. A red spot glowed on one cheek, while the other was pale as death, and his lips from time to time were moved with a short spasmodic jerk, as if some sudden pain shot through him. At last, with a great effort, he pushed all the gold into the centre of the table, and cried out, but in a voice so strange and inarticulate, that the words could not be distinguished.

"You said 'rouge,' Count, I think?" asked the Croupier.

"I fancy the Gentleman said 'noir,'" remarked a bystander.

"Let him declare for himself," observed another.

"But the game has already begun," said the Banker.

"So much the worse for the bank," remarked another, laughing; "for its easy to see what will win."

"Pray declare your colour, Sir," said an impatient gambler at Dalton's side, "the whole table is waiting for you."

Dalton started, and, darting an angry look at the speaker, made an effort to rise from the table. He failed at first, but grasping the shoulder of the Croupier, he arose to his full height, and stared around him. All was hushed and still, not a sound was heard, as in that assembly, torn with so many passions, every eye was turned towards the gigantic old man, who, with red eye-balls and outstretched hands, seemed to hurl defiance at them. Backwards and forwards he swayed for a second or two, and then, with a low, faint cry—the last wail of a broken heart—he fell with a crash upon the table. There he lay, his white hairs streaming over the gold and silver pieces, and his bony fingers flattened upon the cards. "A fit!—he's in a fit!" cried some, as they endeavoured to raise him.—"Worse still!" remarked another, as he passed his hand from the pulse to the heart, "he is dead!"

The hero of a hundred fights, he who has seen death in every shape and on every field, must yield the palm of indifference to its terrors to the gambler. All the glorious insanity of a battle, all the reckless enthusiasm of a storm, even the headlong impetuosity of a charge, cannot supply the cold apathy of the gambler's heart; and so was it that they saw in that lifeless form nothing beyond a disagreeable interruption to their game, and muttered their impatience at the delay in its removal.

"Well," said Mrs. Ricketts, as she sat in an adjoining apartment, "have you any tidings of our dear 'Amphytrion?'—Is he winning to-night?" The question was addressed to the tall, dark man, who so lately had been standing behind Dalton's chair, and was our old acquaintance, Count Patrolaffsky.

"He no win no more, Madame," replied he, solemnly.

"Has he gone away, then?—has he gone home without us?

"He has gone home, indeed—into the other world," said he, shaking his head.

"What do you mean, Count? For Heaven's sake, speak intelligibly."

"I mean as I do say, Madame. He play a game as would ruin Rothschild; always change, and always at de wrong time, and never know when to make his 'parole.' Ah, dat is de gran' secret of all play; when you know where to make your 'parole' you win de whole world! Well, he is gone now, poor man, he cannot play no more!"

"Martha—Scroope, do go—learn something—see what has happened."

"Oh, here's the Colonel. Colonel Haggerstone, what is this dreadful news I hear?"

"Your accomplished friend has taken a French leave of you, Madame, and was in such a hurry to go, that he wouldn't wait for another turn of the cards."

"He ain't d—d—dead?" screamed Purvis.

"I'm very much afraid they'll insist on burying him to-morrow or next day, under that impression, Sir," said Haggerstone.

"What a terrible event!—how dreadful!" said Martha, feelingly; "and his poor daughter, who loved him so ardently."

"That must be thought of," interrupted Mrs. Ricketts, at once roused to activity by thoughts of self-interest. "Scroope, order the carriage at once. I must break it to her myself. Have you any particulars for me, Colonel?"

"None, Madame! If Coroners were the fashion here, they'd bring in

a verdict of 'Died from backing the wrong colour, with a decided against the rake!'"

"Yes, it is ver' true, he always play bad," muttered the Pole.

And now the room began to fill with people discussing the late incident in every possible mood, and with every imaginable shade of sentiment. A few—a very few—dropped some expressions of pity and compassion. Many preferred to make a display of their own courage by a bantering, scornful tone, and some only saw in the event how unsuited certain natures were to contend with the changeful fortunes of high play. These were, for the most part, Dalton's acquaintances, and who had often told him—at least so they now took credit for—that "he had no head for play." Interspersed with these were little discussions as to the immediate cause of death, as full of ignorance and as ingenious as such explanations usually are, all being contemptuously wound up by Haggerstone's remark, "That death was like matrimony—very difficult when wanted, but impossible to escape when you sought to avoid it!" As this remark had the benefit of causing a blush to poor Martha, he gave his arm to the ladies, with a sense of gratification that came as near happiness as anything he could imagine.

"Is Miss Dalton in the drawing-room?" said Mrs. Ricketts, as with an air of deep importance she swept through the Hall of the Villa.

"She's in her room, Madame," said the maid.

"Ask if she will receive me—if I may speak to her?"

The maid went out, and returned with the answer, that "Miss Dalton was sleeping."

"Oh, let her sleep!" cried Martha. "Who knows when she will taste such rest again?"

Mrs. Ricketts bestowed a glance of withering scorn on her sister, and pushed roughly past her, towards Nelly's chamber. A few minutes after a wild shrill shriek was heard through the house, and then all was still!

CHAPTER XIX.

NELLY'S SORROWS.

STUNNED, but not overcome, by the terrible shock, Nelly Dalton sat beside the bed where the dead man lay in all that stern mockery of calm so dreadful to look upon. Some candles burned on either side, and threw a yellowish glare over the bold, strong features on which her tears had fallen, as, with a cold hand clasped in his, she sat and watched him.

With all its frequency, Death never loses its terrors for us! Let a man be callous as a hard world, and a gloomy road in it, can make him; let him drug his mind with every anodyne of infidelity; let him be bereft of all affection, and walk alone on his life road; there is yet that which can thrill his heart in the aspect of the lips that are never to move more, and the eyes that are fixed for ever. But what agony of suffering is it when the lost one has been the link that tied us to life—the daily object of our care—the motive of every thought and every action! Such had been her father to poor Nelly. His wayward, capricious humours, all his infirmities of temper and body, had called forth those exertions which made the business of her life, and gave a purpose and direction to her existence, now, repaid by some passing expression of thankfulness or affection, or, better still, by some transient gleam of hope that he was stronger in health, or better in spirits, than his wont. Now, rallied by that sense of duty which can ennoble the humblest, as it can the greatest of human efforts, she watched over him as might a mother over an ailing child. Catching at his allusions to "Home," as he still called it, she used to feed her hopes with thinking that at some distant day they were to return to their own land again, and pass their last years in tranquil retirement together; and now Hope and Duty were alike extinguished. "The fount that fed the river of her thoughts" was dry, and she was alone—utterly alone—in the world!

Old Andy, recalled by some curious instinct to a momentary activity, shuffled about the room, snuffing the candles, or muttering a faint prayer at the bedside; but she did not notice him any more than the figure who, in an attitude of deep devotion, knelt at the foot of the bed. This was Hanserl, who, book in hand, recited the offices with all the fervent rapidity of a true Catholic. Twice, he started and looked up from his task, disturbed by some noise without; but when it occurred a third time, he laid his book gently down, and stole noiselessly from the room.

[illegible] said Kraus sneeringly.

[illegible] said [illegible] calmly.

[illegible] give you notice of it," said [illegible]

[illegible] Let us be in peace to-night—be [illegible]

[illegible] look at him for a thousand [illegible]

[illegible] to-morrow," said Kraus, in a low [illegible] will have begun."

"To-morrow afternoon—Lord! how close he r—ran it," exclaimed Purvis.

"Once more, I say, be patient," said Hans. "Let these good people go. You shall lose nothing—I pledge the word of a man who never told a falsehood. I will pay all. Have some pity, however, for this orphan—one who has now neither a home nor a country."

"Yes, yes, he'll have p—pity; he's an excellent man is Mr. Kraus. I shouldn't wonder if we'd come to terms about this Vi—Villa for ourselves."

Hans turned a look of anger towards him, and then said:—"Go, Sir, and take those that belong to you away also. This place no longer can suit you nor them. He who lies yonder can be flattered and fawned on no more; and, as for her, she is above your compassion, if it even lay in your heart to offer it."

"He ain't quite right here," whispered Purvis to Kraus, as he tapped his forehead significantly. "They told me that, in the town."

Kraus moved away without reply, and Purvis followed him. "He's rich, too, they say," added he, in a whisper.

"They'll scarcely say as much, this day week," said Kraus, sneeringly; while, beckoning his people to follow him, he left the house.

No sooner did Mrs. Ricketts learn that her worldly possessions were safe, and that the harpy clutches of the Law could make no seizure among those curious turbans and wonderful tunics which composed her wardrobe, than she immediately addressed herself to the active duties of the hour, with a mind at ease, and, while packing her trunks, inadvertently stowed away such little stray articles as might not be immediately missed, and might serve hereafter to recal thoughts of "poor dear Miss Dalton," for so she now preferred to name her.

"Those little box figures, Martha; don't forget them. They of course don't belong to the house; and Scroope suspects that the bracket for the hall lamp must have been her carving also."

"I've p—put away two pencil drawings marked 'E. D.,' and a little sketch in oil of the Alten Schloss; and I've my pockets stuffed with the tulip roots."

"Well thought of, Scroope; and there's a beautiful paper-knife—poor thing, she's not likely to want it now. What a sad bereavement! And are his affairs really so bad?"

"Ov—over head and ears in debt. There ain't enough to bury him if the Dwarf does not shell out—but he will. They say he's in love with Nelly—he, he, he!"

"Shocking, quite shocking. Yes, Martha, that telescope is a very good one. What improvidence—what culpable improvidence!"

"And is she quite friendless?" asked Martha, feelingly.

"Not while she has our protection," said Mrs. Ricketts, grandly. "I've determined to take her up."

Martha reddened slightly at the phrase, for she knew of some other who had been so "taken up," and with what small profit to their prosperity!

"Her talents, when aided by our patronage, will always support her," said Mrs. Ricketts, "and I mean, when the shock of this calamity is past, to employ her on a little group for a centrepiece for our dinner-table. She will, of course, be charmed to have her genius displayed to such advantage. It will afford us a suitable opportunity of introducing her name."

"And we shall have the piece of carving for nothing," said Martha, who innocently believed that she was supplying another argument of equal delicacy and force.

"You're an idiot," said Mrs. Ricketts, angrily, "and I begin to fear you will never be anything else."

"I'm quite sure I shall not," muttered the other, with a faint submissiveness, and continued her task of packing the trunks.

"Take care that you find out her sister's address, Martha. I am sadly in want of some furs; that tippet, I suppose, is only fit for you now, and my sable muff is like a dog in the mange. The opportunity is a most favourable one, for when the Princess, as they persist in calling her, knows that her sister is our dependent, we may make our own terms. It would be the very ruin of her in St. Petersburg to publish such a fact."

"But Miss Dalton will surely write to her, herself."

"She can be persuaded, I trust, to the contrary," said Mrs. Ricketts, knowingly; "she can be shown that such an appeal would in all likelihood wreck her sister's fortunes, that the confession of such a relationship would utterly destroy her position in that proud capital; and, if she prove obstinate, the letter need not go; you understand that, at least," added she, with a contemptuous glance that made poor Martha tremble.

Mrs. Ricketts was now silent, and sat revelling in the various thoughts that her active mind suggested. Upon the whole, although Dalton's dying was an inconvenience, there were some compensating circumstances. She had gained a most useful *protégée* in Nelly—one whose talents might be made of excellent use, and whose humble, unpretending nature, would exact no requital. Again, the season at Baden was nearly over, a week or two more, at most, was all that remained. The "Villino," which she had let for the summer to some confiding family, who believed that Florence was a Paradise in July and August, would again be at her disposal, and, in fact, as she phrased it, "the conjunctures were all felicitous," and her campaign had not been unfruitful. This

latter fact attested itself in the aspect of her travelling carriage with its "spolia" on the roof, and its various acquired objects under the body—pictures, china, plate, coins, brocades, old lace, books, prints, manuscripts, armour, stained glass, trinkets, and relics of all kinds, showed that travel with her was no unprofitable occupation, and that she had realised the grand desideratum of combining pleasure with solid advantage.

Meanwhile, so ingenious is thorough selfishness, she fancied herself a benefactor of the whole human race. All the cajoleries she used to practice, she thought were the amiable overflowings of a kindly nature; her coarse flatteries she deemed irresistible fascinations; her duperies even seemed only the triumphs of a mind transcendently rich in resources, and never for a moment suspected that the false coin she was uttering could be called in question, though the metal was too base for imposition. There is no supply without demand, and if the world did not like such characters there would be none of them! The Ricketts' are, however, a large and an increasing class in society, and, to our national shame be it said, they are distinctively English in origin. And now we leave her, little regretting if it be for ever; and if we turn to a darker page in our story, it is, at least, to one wherein our sympathies are more fairly enlisted.

That long night passed over like a dreary dream, and morning was now mingling its beams with the glare of the tapers, as Nelly sat beside the death-bed.

"Come with me, Fräulein; come away from this," said Hanserl, as with a tearful eye and quivering lip he stood before her.

Nelly shook her head slowly, and for answer turned her gaze on the dead man.

"You shall come back again; I promise you, you shall come back again," said he, softly.

She arose without a word and followed him. They passed through an outer room, and entered the garden, where Hans, taking her hand, led her to a seat.

"You will be better here, Fräulein," said he, respectfully; "the air is fresh and balmy."

"He sat beside me on this bench three nights ago," said she, as if talking to herself, "and said how he wished I could be with Kate, but that he could not part with me; and see—we are parted, and for a longer separation! Oh, Hanserl! what we would give to recall some of the past, when Death has closed it for ever against us!"

"Remember Wieland, Fräulein; he tells us that 'the Impossible is a tree without fruit or flowers.'"

"And yet my mind will dwell on nothing else. The little thwartings of his will—the cold compliance which should have been yielded in a

better spirit—the counsels that often only irritated—how they rise up now, like stern accusers, before me, and tell me that I failed in my duty."

"Not so, Fräulein—not so," said Hans, reverently.

"But there is worse than that, Hanserl, far worse," said she, tremblingly. "To smooth the rough path of life, I descended to deception. I told him the best when my heart felt the worst. Had he known of Kate's real lot, and had he sorrowed over *her* fortunes, might not such grief have been hallowed to him! To have wept over Frank—the poor boy in prison—might have raised his thoughts to other themes than the dissipation that surrounded him. And all this was *my* fault. I would have his love, and see the price it has cost me!" She hid her face between her hands, and never spoke for a long time. At length she lifted up her eyes, red as they were with weeping, and, with a heavy sigh, said, "How far is it to Vienna, Hanserl?"

"To Vienna! Fräulein. It is a long journey—more than four hundred miles; but why do you ask?"

"I was thinking that if I saw Count Stephen—if I could but tell him our sad story myself—that he might intercede for poor Frank, and perhaps obtain his freedom. His crime can scarcely be beyond the reach of mercy, and his youth will plead for him. And is it so far away, Hanserl?"

"At the very least—and a costly journey too."

"But I would go on foot, Hans. Lame as I am, I can walk for miles without fatigue, and I feel as if the exertion would be a solace to me, and that my mind, bent upon a good object, could the more easily turn away from my own desolation. Oh, Hans, think me not selfish that I speak thus; but thoughts of my own loneliness are so linked with all I have lost, I cannot separate them. Even the humble duty that I filled gave a value to my life, without which, my worthlessness would have crushed me—for what could poor lame Nelly be? I, that had no buoyancy for the young—no ripe judgment for the old—and yet, in caring for him that is gone, I found a taste of love and happiness."

"I will go with you, Fräulein; you shall not take this weary road alone. Heaven knows that, without you, this place would be too dreary for me."

"But your house, Hanserl—all that you possess—the fruits of all your hard industry——"

"Speak not of them," said Hans, reddening. "They who deem me rich are mistaken. I have speculated ill—I have made bad ventures—and what I have will but pay my debts, and I will be glad to quit this spot."

"And I," said Nelly, with a voice of deep emotion,—"I cannot say

that I can help you. I know nothing of what may remain to me in this world; my father never spoke to me latterly of his means, and I may be, for aught I know, a beggar. Will you see his Banker and speak with him?"

"I have done so," said Hans, slowly. "He claims some small sum as due to him."

"And how am I to pay it?" said Nelly, growing pale. "It is true, I can labour——"

"Have no care for this, Fräulein. It shall be looked to, and you shall repay it hereafter."

"Oh, Hanserl, beware!" said she, solemnly; "we are an unfortunate race to those who help us; my poor father often said so, and even his superstitions are hallowed to me, now."

A gesture from some one within the house called Hans away, and Nelly was left alone. She sat with her eyes closed and her hands firmly clasped, deep in her own sad thoughts, when she heard a footstep close by. It was old Andy, who, with a piece of ragged crape fastened round his arm, was slowly tottering towards her. His face was flushed, and his eye wild and excited, as he continued to mutter and reply to himself—

"A Dalton—one of the ould stock—and maybe the last of them too."

"What is it, Andy?—tell me what is it?" said she, kindly.

"There's no wake—there isn't as much as a tenant's child would have!"

"We are almost friendless here, Andy. It is not our own country."

"Ain't they Christians, though; couldn't they keep the corpse company? Is it four candles and a deal coffin ought to be at a Dalton's burial?"

"And we are poor also," said she, meekly.

"And hasn't the poorest respect for the dead?" said he, sternly. "Wouldn't they sell the cow, or the last pig, out of honour to him that's gone to glory. I'll not stay longer in the place; I'll have my discharge; I'll go back to Ireland."

"Poor fellow," said Nelly, taking his hand, kindly, and seating him beside her. "You loved him so! and he loved *you*, Andy. He loved to hear you sing your old songs, and tell over the names of his favourite hounds."

"Bessy and Countess were the sweetest among them," said the old man, wandering away to old memories of the past, "but Nora was truer than either." And so he fell into a low mumbling to himself, endeavouring, as it seemed, to recall the forgotten line of some hunting chant, while Nelly returned to the house to take her last farewell, ere the coffin lid was closed.

CHAPTER XX.

A LAST ADIEU.

The pleasure-seekers of Baden were not likely to be diverted from their pursuits by such humble calamities as Nelly Dalton's, and the gay world went on its way and as merrily as though Death or Ruin could have no answer for them. Already the happy groups were gathering before the Casinos. The sounds of music filled the air. Wealth was displaying its gorgeous attractions: beauty, her fascinations; and wit, its brilliancy: and none had a thought for that sad episode which a few hours had half obliterated from every mind. Under a spreading chestnut-tree, and around a table sumptuously spread for breakfast, a large party was assembled, discussing the news of the morning, and the plans of pleasure for the day. Some, had but thoughts for the play-table, and could attune their ears to no other sounds than the chink of the gold and the rake of the Croupier—others, chatted of the world of politics and fashion—and a few, with that love of the picturesque the taste for painting engenders, were admiring the changeful effects of passing clouds on the landscape, and pointing out spots of peculiar beauty and sublimity.

"How well the Alten Schloss looks, with that mass of shadow on it," remarked a young man to a fair and delicate looking girl beside him; "and see how the weeping ash waves over the old walls, like a banner."

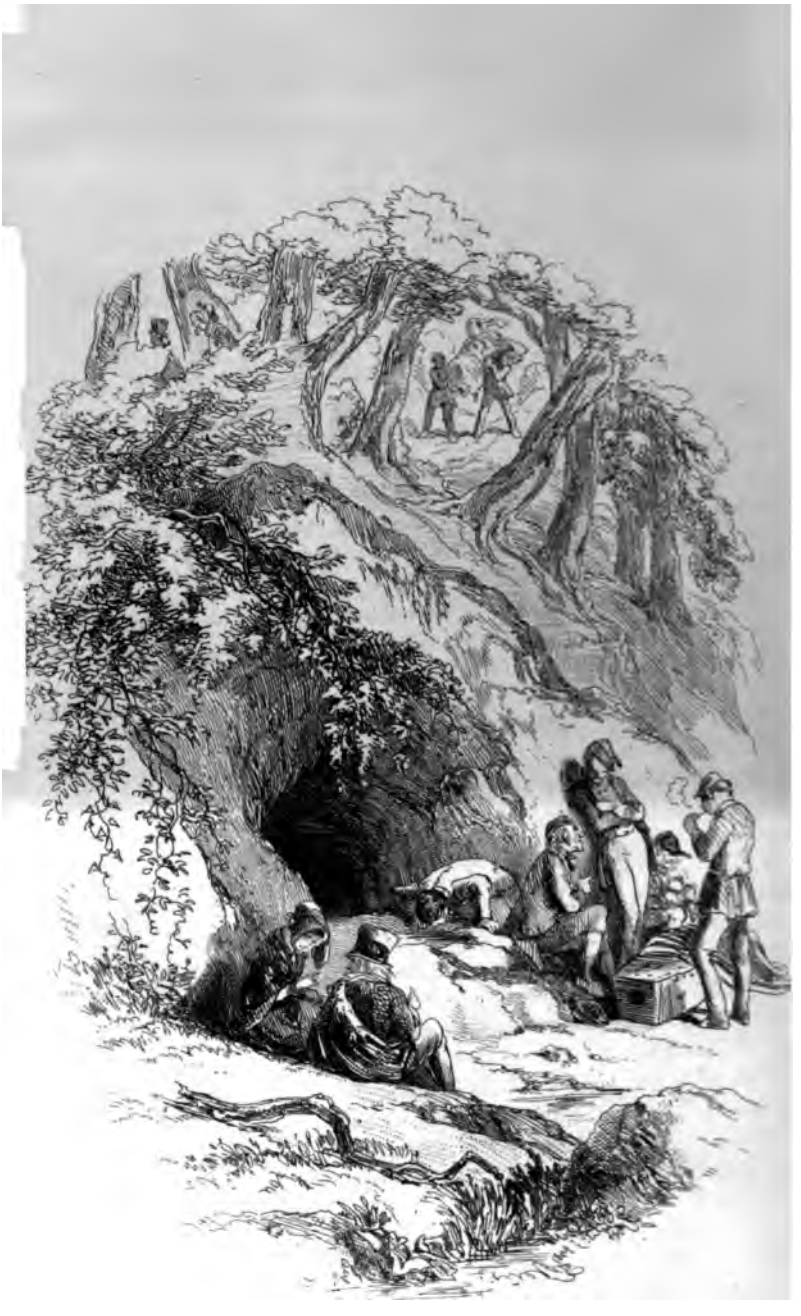
"And look!" cried she—"mark that little procession that is slowly winding up the pathway—what effect the few figures give to the scene, as they appear and disappear with each turning of the road. Some pilgrimage to a Holy Shrine, I fancy."

"No: it is a funeral. I can mark what Shelly calls the step of the bearers, 'heavy and slow;' and, if you listen, you'll catch the sound of the death-bell."

"It's quite a picture, I declare," said she. "I wish I had brought my sketch-book."

And so it is ever! The sorrows that are rending some hearts in twain are but as objects of picturesque effect to others. And even the young and the tender-minded learn to look on the calamities that touch them not as things of mere artistic meaning.

Up that steep road, over rock and rugged stone, brushing between the tangled briars, or with difficulty being turned around some sharp



angle, was now borne the corpse of him who had so often wended the same path on his homeward way. Four peasants carried the coffin, which was followed by Nelly and old Andy; Hans, from a sense of respect, walking behind them. It was a long and arduous ascent, and they were often obliged to halt and take breath; and at such times Nelly would kneel down beside the coffin and pray. The sufferings of the last two days had left deep traces on her features, which had lost every tinge of colour; her eyes, too, were deep set and heavy; but in the elevated expression of her brow at moments, and the compression of her lips, might be seen the energy of one who had a firm purpose, and was resolved to carry it through.

"Sit down and rest yourself, Fräulein," said Hans, as he saw that she faltered in her step. "We are yet far from the top."

"I will rest at the fountain," said she, faintly. "It was a favourite spot of his." And they moved slowly on, once more.

The fountain was a little well, carved in the native rock, around which some rude seats were also fashioned, the whole sheltered by a thick roof of foliage, which even in noon-day cast a deep shadow around, and effectually screened it from the path that wound along beside it.

Scarcely had the bearers deposited the coffin beside the well, when the sound of voices was heard as a considerable number of persons descended the path. Words in French, German, and English, showed that the party consisted of representatives of these nations; but one voice, if once heard not readily forgotten, towered high above all the rest.

"I cannot offer my arm, Madam," cried a sharp, ringing accent, "as the infernal road will not admit of two, abreast, but I can go before and pilot you."

"Oh, thanks, Sir," replied a mild, meek tone; "I can get on very well indeed. I am only uneasy about my sister."

"I don't suspect that she incurs either much risk or fatigue, Madam," rejoined the other, "seeing that she is seated in an arm-chair, and carried by two of the stoutest fellows in Baden."

"But the exertion, in her weak state——"

"She might make the ascent of Mont Blanc, Madam, with the same appliances; and if you only told her that there were bargains to be had at the top, I verily believe she would do so."

"You don't think the things were cheap here, Colonel?" said Miss Martha, who thought by a diversion to draw Haggerstone away from so dangerous a discussion.

"I am no connoisseur in Dutch dolls—nor Noah's arks, Madam, although modern society presents us with something very like both; but I concluded that the prices were not exorbitant. I went there my-

beneath; and it was in one of his evening rambles that he had fixed upon the spot where they should lay him, if he could not "rest his bones with his forefathers."

"Sixty-eight!" muttered the old Priest, as he read the inscription on the coffin-lid—"in the pride and vigour of manhood! Was he noble, that I see these quarterings painted here?"

"Hush—that is his daughter," whispered Hanserl.

"If he were of noble blood, he should have lain in the chapel, and on a catafalque," muttered the Priest.

"The family is noble—but poor," said Hans, in a low whisper.

"A low mass, without the choir, would not ruin the poorest," said the Priest, who sprinkled the coffin with half impatience, and, mumbling a few prayers, retired. And now the body was committed to the earth, and the grave was filled. The last sod was patted down with the shovel; and Nelly, unable to bear her grief any longer in silence, threw herself on the spot, and wept bitterly. Hans withdrew, and motioned to the others to follow him; and none remained but old Andy, who, on his knees, and with clasped hands, seemed to think that he was praying, although all his attention was directed to a little group of children who stood near, and whom he awed into reverence by many a threatening gesture.

And thus the long day stole over; and it was only as evening drew nigh, that Nelly could be induced to take her last farewell, and breathe her last prayer over the grave of her father.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TYROL JOURNEY.

If our task as story teller had not other claims on us, we would gladly linger with Nelly Dalton, as, in company with Hanserl and Old Andy, she wended her slow way through the deep valleys of the Schwartzwald. The little party might have created astonishment in even more frequented districts than the primitive tract in which they journeyed, and have suggested many a puzzling doubt as to what rank or condition they belonged. For Andy's convenience Hans had purchased an ass and a small cart, such as are sometimes used by the travelling beggars of every land. Seated in this, and in his old hunting-cap and scarlet-coat, the old man fancied it were some pleasure excursion, or that he was "trundling along" to "cover," as he used to do sixty years ago. Nelly walked at his side, now roused from

her deep musings to reply to some meaningless question of the old man, or now, feeding her sad memories as she listened to the little snatches of song which occasionally broke from him. Hanserl formed the rear-guard, making, with his redoubted battle-axe, and a most formidable old Turkish pistol, not the least singular figure in the procession. Their very baggage, too, had something strange and incomprehensible to common eyes; for, amidst stray scraps of old armour, the little remnants of Hanserl's collection, were to be seen an unfinished figure by Nelly's hand, or the rude beginning of some new group. Along with these were books and tools, and an infinity of queer costumes, of the Dwarf's own designing, for various seasons of the year.

Still there was no impertinence in the curiosity that met them. If Andy's strange equipage and stranger dress might have raised a smile, Nelly's gentle look and modest air as rapidly checked it, and they who would have laughed outright at Hanserl's mock-chieftainship were subdued to a respectful deference by the placid dignity of her who walked before him. It was in that memorable year whose doings are recorded in our memory with all the solemn force of History, and all the distinct and vivid effect of events passing before our own eyes. That era, when Thrones rocked and tottered, and Kings, who seemed destined to transmit their crowns to unborn generations, became exiles, and cast away: their state, a mockery, and their princely homes given up to pillage. When the brightest day dreams of good men became bound up with the wildest imaginings of the bold and the bad, and the word Freedom comprehended all that was most glorious in self-devotion, and all that was most reckless in hate! In that troubled time, Hanserl wisely sought out the districts of mountain and crag—the homes of the hunter—in preference to the more travelled roads, and prudently preferred even the devious windings of the solitary glens to the thronged and peopled highways that connected great cities.

His plan was to direct their steps through the Vorarlberg into the Tyrol, where in a small village, near Meran, his mother still lived. There, in case of need, Nelly would find a refuge, and, at all events, could halt while he explored the way to Vienna, and examined how far it might be safe for her to proceed thither. Even in all her affliction, out of the depths of a sorrow so devoid of hope, Nelly felt the glorious influence of the grand scenery through which they travelled. The Giant Mountains, snow-capped in early autumn, the boundless forests that crowded along their sides, the foaming cataracts as they fell in sheets of boiling water, the tranquil lakes that reflected tower and cliff and spire, the picturesque village, where life seemed to ripple on as peacefully as the clear stream before the peasant's door, the song of the birds, the

tolling of the bells, the laugh of the children, the Alp horn answered from cliff to cliff, and dying away in distant echo—all these were realisations of many a girlish hope, when she wished her father to seek out some secluded village, and pass a life of obscure but united labour. There was no Quixotism in the fancy. She knew well what it was to toil and work; to rise early, and go late to rest; to feed on coarse fare, and be clad in mean attire. All that poverty can inflict of privation she had tasted but, fearlessly, and with a bold heart; self-reliance elevating her thoughts above every little adverse incident, and giving to her struggle that character of a task, a holy and a righteous task, which made at once her life's purpose and reward.

Scarcely a village at which they halted that did not strike her as like what her mind had often pictured for "their own," and many a quaint old house, with its carved galleries and latticed porch, she stood to gaze on, fancying it their home, and peopling every spot with the forms of those she loved. Oh! why had they not chosen this humble road?—why had their "Paths in Life" separated?—were the bitter reflections which now filled her eyes with tears and made her bosom heave almost to bursting. She did not foolishly suppose that the peasant can claim exemption from the trials and crosses of life, and that sorrow finds no entrance into remote and unfrequented tracts, but she knew that such burdens would not be too heavy for their strength, and that, while living a life of unpretending poverty, they should be free from the slavery of an assumed position, and able to combat the world fairly and honestly.

Of all lands the Tyrol is best suited to foster such feelings as these. There is a harmony and a keeping about it that is rarely found elsewhere. The dwellings of the people so according with the character of the scenery; the costumes, the greetings, the songs of the peasantry, their simple and touching piety, their manners so happily blending independence with courtesy, are felt, at once, as a charm, and give a colour to the enjoyment of every one who sojourns amongst them. These were the sights and sounds which, better than all the blandishments of wealth, could soothe poor Nelly's sorrow, and make her thankful in the midst of her afflictions even to have witnessed them. As for Hanserl, his excitement grew daily higher as he passed the Arlberg and drew near the spots he had seen in childhood. Now, preparing some little surprise for Nelly, as they turned the angle of a cliff and gazed down upon a terrible gorge beneath; now, apprising her of some little shrine where pious wayfarers were wont to halt and pray; now, speculating if the old host of the village inn would be alive, or still remember him, he went along merrily, occasionally singing some "Alp Lied," or calling to mind some ancient legend of the scene through which they journeyed. Above all, however,

was his delight at the thought of seeing his old mother again. No sense of disappointment dashed this pleasure because he was returning poor and penniless. Home and the "Frau Mutter," as he reverently called her, had their hold upon his heart quite distinct from every accident of fortune. To tell her of all he had seen in far-away lands, for Hanserl thought himself a great traveller; to describe the great Cathedral of Worms, of its vaulted aisles and painted windows, of its saintly effigies and deep-toned organ, of the thousands who could kneel before the high altar; then, what marvellous relics were there to describe!—not to speak of the memorable valley at Eschgau, where "Siegfried slew the Dragon." Poor Hans! the scenes of his youth had made him young again, and it was the very triumph of his joy when he could interest Nelly in some story, or make her listen with attention to the rude verses of some "Tyroler" poem.

Gladly would we linger with them as they went slowly along through the deep valley of Landeck, and, halting a day at the Pontlatzer brücke, that Hans might describe the heroic defence of his countrymen against the French and Bavarian forces, and then, skirting along the Engadine, came in sight of the great Ortoler Spitze—the highest of the Tyrol Alps. And now, they reach Nauders, and, traversing a wild and dreary mountain tract, where even in autumn the snow is seen in clefts and crevices of the rock, they gradually gain the crest of the ridge, and look down at length on glorious Meran with the devotion of the Pilgrim in sight of the Holy City. Hans knelt down and prayed fervently as his eyes beheld that garden valley with its vine-clad slopes and waving woods; its silvery river gliding along beneath bright villages and feudal castles. But soon he saw them no longer, for his eyes swam over in tears, and he sobbed like a child.

"There, Fräulein, yonder where you see the river winding to the south'ard, you see an old tower—'the Passayer Turm,' it is called; the Frau Mutter lives there. I see some one in the garden." And, overcome by emotion, he hid his face and wept.

Near as they seemed to the end of their journey, it was night ere they gained the valley at the foot of the mountain. The cottages were closed, and, except in the town—still about a mile distant—not a light was to be seen. The Tyrolers are an early race, and retire to rest soon after dusk. Hanserl, however, wanted no guidance to the way, and trudged along in front of the cart, following each winding of the track as though he had gone it but the day before. Except a chance caution about the road, he never spoke—his heart was full of "home." The fatigue of a long day's journey, and the cold of the night air, had made Andy querulous and discontented, and it was all Nelly could do to answer the fretful

questions and soothe down the irritation of the old man; but Hans heard nothing of either. At last they reached a little open space formed by a bend in the river, and came in sight of the old tower, at the foot of which, and abutting against it, stood a small cottage. A light gleamed from a little window, and no sooner had Hans seen it than he exclaimed,

"Gott sey dank! Fräulien, she is well. That is the Frau Mutter."

Poor Nelly's lip quivered as she tried to speak, for, humble as it was, what would she have given to have had even such a "home?" And now, passing through a little garden, Hans halted, and assisted Andy from the cart.

"Where are we, at all? sure this isn't a place to stop the night in!" cried the old man, querulously.

"Hush, Andy, hush," whispered Nelly.

"'Tis thieves and vagabonds, maybe, lives here, Miss Nelly," said he, in a low voice.

"No, Andy, no; it is a kind welcome that awaits us."

"Ayeh!" exclaimed he, "I know betther than that!"

Hans by this time had approached the door, and raised the latch—for in the Tyrol the night rarely calls for other fastening. Nelly heard the sharp, clear sound of an old woman's voice above the hum of a spinning-wheel, and then the glad burst of joy as the mother recognised her son. Unwilling to interrupt their happiness, Nelly moved away out of hearing, when Hanserl came running out, followed by the old woman.

"This is the Fräulein, mother," cried he, with a burst of delight; and the old woman, taking Nelly's hand, kissed it with deep respect.

With native courtesy she welcomed Nelly, and, as she entered her house, pointed with pride to a Madonna of Nelly's own carving, which stood on a bracket against the wall.

"You see, Fräulein," said she, "how I have known you for many a day back; and there is your Saint Christopher, and there the 'Blessed Agnes at the Well.'" And so was it. The groups and figures which she believed to have been sold by Hanserl, were all stored up here and treasured like household gods. "Many a traveller has come here just to see these," continued the old peasant woman, "and many a tempting sum have they offered if I would sell them, but in all my poverty I did not stoop to this."

"Frau Mutter, Frau Mutter," said Hans, rebukingly, and trying to cut short what he feared might offend Nelly.

"Nay, Hanserl, it is but the truth," said she, firmly, "I will not say that I did not do more wisely too, for they who came left me always some little present. Even the poor gave me their blessing, and said that they were happier when they had prayed before the Blessed Agnes." While

[illegible] running on in all the garrulity of old age, she never neglected the care of receiving her guests with suitable hospitality. Old Andy was accommodated with a deep straw chair near the stove. The little chamber, which, for its view upon the Passayer Thal, had been specially devoted to receive travellers, was got ready for Nelly, and Hans, once more at home, busied himself in arranging the household, and preparing supper.

"You are wondering at all the comforts you find here, Hanserl," said the old woman, "but see here, this will tell you whence they came," and, opening an old ebony cabinet, she took out a large square letter with a heavy seal. "That reached me on a Christmas-day, Hanserl; the paper was from the Imperial 'Chancellerie' of Vienna, setting forth that, as the widow of Hans Roeckle, of Meran, born of Tyrol parents, and married to a Tyroler, had attained the age of eighty years, and never asked alms, nor sought for other aid than her own industry, she was now entitled to the Maria Theresian pension of twelve kreutzers a day for the rest of her life. I told them," said the old woman, proudly, "that my son had always taken care to provide for me, and that there were others that might want it more than me, but the Kreis-Hauptman said, that my refusal would be an offence to the 'Kaiser,' who had heard of my name from one of the Arch-Duchesses who travelled this way, and who had seen these blessed images, and wished to buy them; so that I was [illegible] to yield, and take, in thankfulness, what was offered in generosity. You see, Hanserl, how true is it, the Fräulein has been our good angel: we have never had bad luck since the Madonna came here!"

Nelly slept soundly that night, and, for the first time since her calamities, her dreams were happy ones. Lulled by the ripple of the river beside her window, and the ceaseless murmuring of the old woman's voice as she sat up talking with her son the whole night long, she tasted, at length, the sweets of deep and refreshing sleep. And what a gorgeous scene burst upon her waking eyes! Around, on every side of the little plain, rose the great mountains of the Tyrol; some, green and tree-clad to their summits, others, snow-capt or hid in the azure-coloured clouds above them. Ancient castles crowned the crags, and foaming cataracts leaped from each fissured gorge: while below, in the valley, there lay a garden of rich profusion—the vine, the olive, and the waving corn—with villages and peasant-houses half hid in the luxuriant verdure. From the lowing cattle beside the river to the re-echoing horn upon the mountains, there seemed to come greeting and answer. All was grandeur and sublimity in the scene; but, more striking than these, was the perfect repose, the deep tranquillity of the picture. The sounds were all those of peasant labour, the song of the vine-dresser, the rustling

noise of the loaded waggon as it moved through some narrow and leafy road, the hissing of the sickle through the ripe corn.

"And yet," said Hanserl, as Nelly stood in silent enjoyment at the little porch, "and yet, Fräulein, beyond those great mountains yonder, there is strife and carnage. Here, all is peaceful and happy; but the whole world of Europe is tempest-torn. Italy is up—all her people are in wild revolt. Hungary is in open insurrection. I speak not of other lands, whose fortunes affect us not, but the great Empire of our Kaiser is convulsed to its very centre. I have just been at Meran, troops are marching in, every hour, and every hour come new messengers to bade them hasten south'ard. Over the Stelvio, where you see that dark line yonder, near the summit of the mountains, on they pour! They say, too, that Upper Austria is in rebellion, and that the roads from Inspruck are unsafe to travel. We are safe here, Fräulein, but you must not venture further. We will try, from some of the officers who pass through, to glean tidings of the Count, your Grand Uncle, and where a letter may reach him; but bear with this humble shelter for a while, and think it a home."

If Nelly was disappointed and baffled by this impediment to her journey, she was not one to pass her time in vague regrets, but at once addressed herself to the call of new duties with a willing mind and a cheerful spirit.

Resuming her long neglected tools, she set to work once more, stimulated by the new scenes and subjects around her. To the little children who often formed her "studies," she became the schoolmistress. To the old who were stricken with sickness, or the helplessness of age, she used to read for hours together. Every little pathway led her to some office of charity or kindness, till the "good Fräulein" became a village by-word, and her name was treasured, and her footstep welcomed in every cottage around.

Her humble dress, her more humble manner, took nothing from the deference they yielded her. They felt too intensely the inborn superiority of her nature, to think of any equality between them, and they venerated her with something like devotion. A physician to the sick—a nurse to the bedridden—a teacher to the ignorant—a blessing and an example to all, Nelly's hours were but too short for the calls of her duties, and in her care for others, she had not time to bestow on her own sorrows.

As for Hanserl, he worked from daylight till dusk. Already the little garden, weed-grown and uncared-for, before, was as blooming as his former one at the Alten Schloss. Under Nelly's guidance many a device was executed, that seemed almost miraculous to the simple neighbours;

and the lichen-clad rocks, the waving water-lilies or trellised creepers, which, in the wild wantonness of nature, they had never noticed, now struck them as the very creations of genius. Even Old Andy was not forgotten in their schemes of happiness; and the old huntsman used to spend hours in the effort to tame a young fox a peasant had brought him—a labour not the less interesting, that its progress suffered many a check, and that many a laugh arose at the backslidings of the pupil.

And now, we leave them for a brief season, all occupied and all happy; nor do we like the Fate that calls us away to other and very different associates.

CHAPTER XXII.

"FLORENCE."

It was of a calm but starless night in winter that Florence was illuminated in honour of a victory over the Austrian troops at Goito. Never was patriotic ardour higher—never were stronger the hopes of Italian independence. From the hour of their retreat from Milan, the Imperial forces had met with little but reverses, and, as day by day they fell back towards the Tyrol Alps, the hosts of their enemies swelled and increased around them; and from Genoa to the Adriatic, all Italy was in march to battle. It is not to speculate on the passable current of events, nor yet to dwell on the causes of that memorable failure, by which dissentient councils and false faith,—the weakness of good men, and the ambition of bad ones,—brought ruin when there might have been victory. Still less is it to gaze upon the brilliant spectacle of the rejoicing city, that we are now wending our way along the Arno, scarcely stopping to notice the thousand stars that glitter on the Duomo, nor the flickering lines of light which trace out the gigantic tower of the Palazzo Vecchio. Our theme is more humble than the former, and far too serious for such dalliance, as the latter.

Leaving the crowded streets, resounding with the wild acclamations and wilder songs of the people, we pass over the Ponte Vecchio, and enter once again the dark abode of Racca Morlacha. Whether from any suspicion of his unpopularity with the people, or from some secret necessity for precaution, the door is fastened by many an extra bolt, and more than one massive chain retains the iron shutters of the window. Perhaps there is something in this conscious security that has made him so sparing in his display of external joy, for two dim-discoloured lamps were all that appeared above the door, and these were soon hooked down

in contemptuous anger by the populace, leaving the little building in total darkness.

In easy indifference to such harmless insult, and not heeding the loud knock, which, from stick or stone, the iron shutters resounded under, the Jew sat at his table in that little chamber beside the Arno, of which the reader already knows the secret. Several decanters of wine are before him, and as he sips his glass and smashes his filbert, his air is that of the very easiest unconcern.

Attempting, but with inferior success, an equal degree of calm, sits the Abbé d'Esmonde on the opposite side of the table. With all his training, his calm features betray, at moments, certain signs of anxiety, and while he speaks, you can see that he is listening to the noises in the street without.

"How I detest that song!" said Morlache, as the full swell of a deep-voiced chorus filled the air. "I verily believe the Revolution has not inflicted us with any thing more outraging to good taste than the air of 'Viva Pio Nono.'"

"Always excepting Pio Nono himself," said D'Esmonde, "who is far more the child than the father of this movement."

"Not bad for a Priest to renounce allegiance to his Holy Master!" said Racca, laughing.

"You mistake me, Signor Morlache," said D'Esmonde, eagerly. "I spoke of Pio Nono, the politician—the rash innovator of time-honoured institutions—the foolish donor of concessions, that must be won back at the price of blood—the man who has been weak enough to head a movement, which he ought to have controlled, in secret. How the people shout! I hear many a voice in accents of no Italian origin."

"Yes, the City is full of Poles and Hungarians."

"It will soon be time to drop the curtain on this act of the drama, Morlache; enough has been done to show the world the dangerous doctrines of these fanatics. They who cry, 'No Property in France,' shout 'No King in Germany'—'No Pope in Rome.' The peaceful or well-ordered must be taught to see in *us* their safeguard against these men. They must learn to think the Church the sanctuary it was of old. From all these convulsions which shatter empires, we are the refuge!"

"But you yourself gave the first impulse to this very movement, Abbé?"

"And wisely and well we did it! Should we have stood passive to watch the gradual growth of that cursed spirit they miscall independent judgment—that rankest heresy that ever corrupted the human heart? Should we have waited till Protestantism with its Bible had sowed the seeds of that right of judgment, which they proclaim is in-

herent in all men? Would it have been safe policy to admit of discussing what was obligatory to obey, and look on while this enlightenment—as they blasphemously term it—was arraigning the dogma of the Church as unblushingly as they questioned the decree of a Minister?"

"I perceive," said the Jew, laughing, "you great politicians are not above taking a lesson from the 'Bourse,' and know the trick of puffing up a bad scheme to a high premium, prepared to sell out the day before 'the fall.'"

"We had higher and nobler views," said D'Esmonde, proudly. "The men who will not come to the Altars of the Church, must be taught her doctrines before the portals. Our task is to proclaim Rome—Eternal Rome—to Europe!"

"Up to this, your success has not been signal," said Morlache, with a sneer. "This victory at Goito has given fresh vigour to the Republicans. The Austrians, once driven beyond the Alps, Monarchy will be short-lived in Italy."

"And who says that they will be so driven? Who even dreams of such a result, save some wild fanatic of Genoa, or some half-informed Minister at London? 'The King of Naples only waits for the excuse of a Calabrian disturbance to recal his contingent. The Pope has already issued an order to Durando not to pass the Po. The Piedmontese themselves are on the verge of an irreparable quarrel. The men of Savoy and the north, for Monarchy. The Genoese, wild with their own ancient ideas of a Ligurian Republic. Is it the Lombards, think you, will conquer Lombardy? or do you fancy that Florence and Pisa are the nurseries of heroes? No, Morlache, the game of revolt is played out in Italy; the last trump is Goito."

"But if flushed with conquest, the Piedmontese press on to greater successes?"

"They cannot—they would not—even if they could," broke in D'Esmonde. "Is it the Republicans will shed their blood to conquer, a kingdom of Upper Italy for Carlo Alberto? Is it the interest of Rome or Naples to see such a power in the Peninsula? Will the troops of the Monarchy, on the other hand, fight for a cause that is to obliterate the Throne? No; believe me, their mutual grudges have been well weighed and estimated. We never dared this bold policy without seeing clearly that their interests could never be reconciled! I think I hear the sound of oars; yes, he must be coming at last!" D'Esmonde opened the window as he spoke, and looked out upon the river, which, reflecting along the sides, the gorgeous pageantry of the illumination was dark as ink in the middle of the stream. "Not a word of this, Morlache, when he joins us," added D'Esmonde.

"*He* is not in your confidence, then?" asked the other.

"*He!* of course he is not! If for no weightier reasons than that he is English and a Protestant. Two things which, however weak they may prove either in patriotism or religion, never fail in their hatred of the Church and her cause. Like one of the Condottieri of old, he has joined the quarrel, because hard knocks are usually associated with booty. Whenever he finds that he has no stake on the table, he'll throw down his cards."

"And the other, the Russian?"

"He is more difficult to understand; but I hope to know him yet. Hush, the boat is close in, be cautious!" And so saying, he filled his glass, and reseated himself in all the seeming ease of careless dalliance. In a few minutes after the prow of a light skiff touched the terrace, and a man stepped out and knocked at the shutter

"Welcome at last," said D'Esmonde, shaking hands with him. "We had almost despaired of seeing you to-night. You appear to have been favoured with a long audience!"

"Yes, confound it!" cried the other, who, throwing off his travelling-cloak, showed the figure of Lord Norwood. "We were kept dangling in an anti-chamber for nigh an hour. Midchikoff's fault, for he would not give his name, nor say any thing more than, that we were two officers with secret despatches from the camp. The people in waiting appeared to think the claim a poor one, and came and went, and looked at us, splashed and dirty as we were; but not, even out of curiosity, did one ask us, what tidings we brought. We might have stayed till now, I believe, if I had not taken the resolution to follow an old Priest—a Bishop, I fancy—who seemed to have the *entrée* every where, and pushing vigorously after him, I passed through half-a-dozen ill-lighted rooms, and at last entered a small drawing-room, where the great man was seated at picquet with old Cassandroni, the Minister. I must say, that considering the unauthorised style of my approach, nothing could be more well-bred and urbane than his reception of me. I was blundering out some kind of apology for my appearance, when he pointed to a chair, and begged me to be seated. Then, recognising Midchikoff, who had just come in, he held out his hand to him. I gave him the dispatches, which he pushed across the table to Cassandroni, as if it were more *his* 'affair,' and then turning to Midchikoff, conversed with him for some time in a low voice. As it would not have been etiquette to observe him too, closely, I kept my eyes on the Minister, and faith, I must say, that he could scarcely have looked more blank and out of sorts, had the news reported a defeat. I suppose these fellows have a kind of official reserve, which represses every show of feeling; but I own that

he folded up the paper with a degree of composure that quite piqued me!

"'Well, Cassandroni,' said his master, 'what's your news?'

"'Very good news, Sir,' said the other, calmly. 'His Majesty has obtained a signal victory near Goito against a considerable force of the Imperial Army, under the command of Radetzky. The action was long and fiercely contested, but a successful advance of artillery to the side of a river, and a most intrepid series of cavalry charges, turned the flank of the enemy, and gained the day. The results do not, however, appear equal to the moral effect upon the army, for there were few prisoners, and no guns taken.'

"'That may perhaps be explained,' said I, interrupting; 'for when the Austrians commenced their movement in retreat——.' Just as I got thus far, I stopped, for I found that the distinguished personage I was addressing had once more turned to Midchikoff, and was in deep conversation with him, totally regardless of me and my explanation.

"'You have been wounded, my Lord?' said he, after a moment.

"'A mere scratch, Sir—a poke of a lance,' said I, smarting under the cool indifference of his manner.

"'I hope you're not too much fatigued to stop to supper,' said he, 'but I arose at the instant, and pleading the excuse of exhaustion and want of rest, begged to be permitted to retire, and here I am, not having tasted anything since I left Padua, and not in the very blandest of tempers either at the graciousness of my reception. As for Midchikoff, he kept his seat as coolly as if he meant to pass his life there; I hesitated for a second or two, expecting that he would join me; but not a bit of it, he smiled his little quiet smile, as much as to say, 'Good night,' and so I left him.'"

"He is probably detained to give some particulars of the engagement," said D'Esmonde.

"How can he?—he was never in it; he was writing letters all day at Head Quarters, and never came up till seven in the evening, when I made down with a smart groom after him, and gave the Duke of Savoy a sandwich out of a silver case. That will be the only memorable fact he can recall of the day's fortune."

"The cause looks well, however," said D'Esmonde, endeavouring to divert his companion into a more agreeable direction.

"Tell me what is the cause, and I will answer you," said Norwood. "So far as *I* see, we are dividing the spoils before we have won the game."

"You surely have no doubt of the result, my Lord?" replied the other eagerly. "The Austrians must relinquish Italy."

"Then who is to take it—that's the question? Is Lombardy to become Piedmont, or a Red Republic? or are your brethren of the slouched hat to step in and portion out the land into snug nurseries for Franciscans and Ursulines? Egad, I'd as soon give it up to old Morlache yonder, and make it a New Jerusalem to educate a young race of money-lenders and usurers!"

"I wish we had even as much security for our loans," said Morlache, smiling.

"I hear of nothing but money—great loans here—immense sums raised there," cried Norwood; "and yet what becomes of it? The army certainly has seen none of it. Large arrears of pay are due; and, as for us who serve on the staff, we are actually supporting the very force we command."

"We are told that large sums have found their way into Austria in shape of secret service," said D'Esmonde, "and with good result too."

"The very worst of bad policy," broke in Norwood. "Pay your friends and thrash your enemies. Deserters are bad allies at the best, but are utterly worthless if they must be paid for desertion. Let them go over like those Hungarian fellows—a whole regiment at a time, and bring both courage and discipline to our ranks! but your rabble of student sympathisers are good for nothing."

"Success has not made you sanguine, my Lord," said Morlache, smiling.

"I have little to be sanguine about," replied he, roughly. "They have not spoiled me with good fortune, and even on this very mission that I have come now, you'll see it is that Russian fellow will receive all the reward; and if there be a decoration conferred, it is he, not I, will obtain it."

"And do you care for such baubles, my Lord?" asked D'Esmonde, in affected surprise.

"We soldiers like these vanities as women do a new shawl, or your Priests admire a smart new vestment, in which I have seen a fellow strut as proudly as any coxcomb in the ballet when he had completed his pirouette. As for myself,," continued he, proudly, "I hold these stars and crosses cheaply enough. I'd mortgage my 'San Guiseppe' tomorrow if Morlache would give me twenty Naps on it."

"The day of richer rewards is not distant, my Lord," said D'Esmonde, "Lombardy will be our own ere the autumn closes, and then—and then——"

"And then we'll cut each other's throats for the booty, you were going to say," burst in Norwood; "but I'm not one of those who think so, Abbé. My notion is, that Austria is making a waiting race, and

quietly leaving dissension to do amongst us, what the snow did for the French at Moscow."

D'Esmonde's cheek grew pale at this shrewd surmise, but he quickly said,

"You mistake them, my Lord. The interests at stake are too heavy for such a critical policy; Austria dare not risk so hazardous a game."

"The wiseheads are beginning to suspect as much," said Norwood, "and certainly amongst the prisoners we have taken there is not a trait of despondency, nor even a doubt as to the result of the campaign. The invariable reply to every question is, the Kaiser will have his own again—aye, and this even from the Hungarians. We captured a young fellow on the afternoon of Goito, who had escaped from prison, and actually broke his arrest to take his share in the battle. He was in what Austrians call Stockhaus arrest, and under sentence either of death, or imprisonment for life, for treason. Well, he got out somehow, and followed his regiment on foot till such time as one of his comrades was knocked over, then, he mounted, and I promise you that he knew his work in the saddle. Twice he charged a half battery of twelves, and sabred our gunners when they stood; and when at last we pushed the Austrian column across the bridge, instead of retreating, as he might, he trusted to saving himself by the river. It was then his horse was shot under him, as he descended the bank, and over they both rolled into the stream. I assure you it was no easy matter to capture him even then, and we took him under a shower of balls from his comrades, that showed how little his life was deemed, in comparison with the opportunity of damaging us. When he was brought in, he was a pitiable object; his forehead was laid open from a sabre cut, his collar bone and left arm broken by the fall, and a gunshot wound in the thigh, which the surgeon affirmed had every appearance of being received early in the action. He wouldn't tell us his name, or anything about his friends, for we wished to have written to them; the only words he ever uttered were a faint attempt at 'Hurrah for the Emperor.'"

"And this a Hungarian?" said D'Esmonde, in surprise.

"He might have been a Pole, or a Wallach, for anything I know; but he was a Hussar, and as gallant a fellow as ever I saw."

"What was the uniform, my Lord?" asked the Abbé.

"Light blue with a green schako—they call them the regiment of Prince Paul of Wirtemberg."

"Tell me his probable age, my Lord; and something of his appearance generally," said D'Esmonde, with increasing earnestness.

"His age, I should guess, to be two or three-and-twenty—not more certainly, and possibly even less than that. In height he is taller than

me, but slighter. As to face, even with all his scars and bruises, he looked a handsome fellow, and had a clear blue eye that might have become an Englishman."

"You did not hear him speak?" asked the Priest, with heightening curiosity.

"Except the few words I have mentioned, he never uttered a syllable. We learned that he had broken his arrest from one of his comrades; but the fellow, seeing our anxiety to hear more, immediately grew reserved, and would tell us nothing. I merely allude to the circumstance to show that the disaffection we trust to, amongst the Hungarians is not universal; and even when they falter in their allegiance to the State, by some strange contradiction they preserve their loyalty to the 'Kaiser.'"

"I wish I could learn more about your prisoner, my lord," said the Abbé, thoughtfully. "The story has interested me deeply."

"Midchikoff can, perhaps, tell you something, then; for he saw him later than I did. He accompanied the Duke of Genoa in an inspection of the prisoners just before we left the camp."

"And you say that he had a fair and Saxon-looking face?" said the Abbé.

"Faith, I've told you all that I know of him," said Norwood, impatiently. "He was a brave soldier, and with ten thousand like him on our side, I'd feel far more at my ease, for the result of this campaign, than with the aid of those splendid squadrons they call the 'Speranza d'Italia.'"

"And the Crociati, my Lord, what are *they* like?" said Morlache, smiling.

"A horde of robbers, a set of cowardly rascals, who have only courage for cruelty—the outpourings of gaols and offcasts of convents—degraded friars and escaped galley-slaves."

"My Lord, my Lord!" interrupted Morlache, suppressing his laughter with difficulty, and enjoying to the full this torrent of indignant anger. "You are surely not describing faithfully the soldiers of the Pope—the warriors whose banners have been blessed by the Holy Father?"

"Ask their General, Ferrari, whom they have three times attempted to murder. Ask *him* their character" said Norwood, passionately, "if D'Esmonde himself will not tell you."

"Has it not been the same in every land that ever struck a blow for liberty?" said the Abbé. "Is it the statesman or the philosopher who have racked their brains and wasted the faculties in thought for the good of their fellow-men, that have gone forth to battle? or is it not rather the host of unquiet spirits who infest every country, and who seek in change the prosperity that others pursue in patient industry.

Some, are enthusiastic for freedom—some, seek a field of personal distinction—some, are mere freebooters; but whatever they be, the cause remains the same."

"You may be right, for all I know—you *are* right," said Norwood, doggedly; "but for my own part I have no fancy to fight shoulder to shoulder with cut-throats and housebreakers, even though the Church should have hallowed them with its blessing." Norwood arose as he said this, and walked impatiently up and down the chamber.

"When do you purpose to return to the army, my Lord?" said D'Esmonde, after a pause.

"I'm not sure—I don't even know if I shall return at all!" said Norwood, hastily. "I see little profit and less glory in the service! What say you, Morlache? Have they the kind of credit you would like to accept for a loan?"

"No, my Lord," said the Jew, laughing; "Lombardy scrip would stand low in our market. I'd rather advance my monies on the faith of your good friend, the Lady Hester Onslow."

Norwood bit his lip and coloured, but made no reply.

"She has crossed into Switzerland, has she not?" asked D'Esmonde, carelessly.

"Gone to England!" said the Viscount, briefly.

"When—how? I never heard of that," said the Abbé. "I have put off writing to her from day to day, never suspecting that she was about to quit the Continent. Nor did she herself, till about a week ago, when Sir Stafford took an equally unexpected departure for the other world——"

"Sir Stafford dead—Lady Hester a widow?"

"Such is, I believe, the natural course of things for a woman to be, when her husband dies."

"A rich widow, too, I presume, my Lord," said the Abbé, with a quiet but subtle glance at Norwood.

"That is more than she knows herself, at this moment, I fancy, for they say that Sir Stafford has involved his bequests with so many difficulties, and hampered them with such a mass of conditions, that whether she will be a *millionaire*, or be actually poor, must depend upon the future. I can answer for one point, however, Abbé," said he, sarcastically: "neither the sacred college, nor the blessed brethren of the 'Pace,' are like to profit by the Banker's economies."

"Indeed, my Lord," said the Abbé, slowly, while a sickly palor came over his countenance.

"He has left a certain Doctor Grounsell his executor," continued

Norwood; "and from all that I can learn, no man has less taste for painted windows, stoles, or Saints' shin-bones."

"Probably, there may be other questions upon which he will prove equally obdurate," said the Abbé, in a voice only audible to the Viscount. "Is her Ladyship at liberty to marry again?"

"I cannot, I grieve to say, give you any information on that point," said Norwood, growing deep red as he spoke.

"As your Lordship is going to England——"

"I didn't say so. I don't remember that I told you that!" cried he, hastily.

"Pardon me if I made such a palpable mistake—but it ran in my head that you said something to that purport."

"It won't do, Abbé!—it won't do," said Norwood, in a low whisper. "We, who have graduated at the 'Red House,' are just as wide awake as you of Louvain and St. Omer."

D'Esmonde looked at him with an expression of blank astonishment, and seemed as if he had not the most vague suspicion as to what the sarcasm referred.

"When can I have half-an-hour with you, Morlache?" said the Viscount.

"Whenever it suits you, my Lord. What say you to, to-morrow morning at eleven?"

"No! no! let it be later, I must have a ten hours' sleep after all this fatigue; and the sooner I begin the better."

"Where do you put up, my Lord—at the Hotel de l'Arno?" asked the Abbé.

"No; I wish we were there, with all my heart: but to do us honour, they have given us quarters at the 'Crocetto," that dreary asylum for stray Archdukes and vagabond Grand Duchesses, in the furthest end of the city. We are surrounded with Chamberlains, Aid-de-Camps, and Guards of Honour. The only thing they have forgotten is a Cook! So I'll come and dine here to-morrow."

"You do me great honour, my Lord. I'm sure, the Abbé D'Esmonde will favour us with his company, also."

"If it be possible, I will," said the Abbé! "Nothing but necessity would make me relinquish so agreeable a prospect."

"Well, till our next meeting," said the Viscount, yawning, as he put on his hat. "It's too late to expect Midchikoff here to-night, and so good-by. The streets are clear by this time, I trust."

"A shrewd fellow too," said Morlache, looking after him.

"No! Morlache, not a bit of it!" said D'Esmonde. "Such intellects bear about the same proportion to really clever men, as a good swords-

man does to a first-rate operator in surgery. They handle a coarse weapon, and they deal with coarse antagonists. Employ them in a subtle negotiation, or a knotty problem, and you might as well ask a Sergeant of the Blues to take up the femoral artery. Did you not remark awhile ago, that for the sake of a sneer, he actually betrayed a secret about Sir Stafford Onslow's will?"

"And you believe all that to be true?"

"Of course I do. The only question is, whether the Irish property, which, if I remember aright, was settled on Lady Hester at her marriage, can be fettered by any of these conditions? That alone amounts to some thousands a year, and would be a most grateful accession to those much-despised brethren his Lordship alluded to."

"You can learn something about that point to-morrow when he dines here."

"He'll not be your guest to-morrow, Morlache. I must continue to occupy him for a day or two. He shall be invited to dine at Court to-morrow—the request is a command—so that you will not see him. Receive Midchikoff if he calls, for I want to hear what he is about here—his money requirements will soon give us the clue—and I, too," said he, stretching and speaking languidly, "I, too, would be the better of some repose; it is now thirty-six hours, Morlache, since I closed my eyes in sleep—during that space I have written, and dictated, and talked, and argued, urging on the luke-warm, restraining the rash, giving confidence to this one, preaching caution to that, and here I am, at the end of all, with my task as far as ever from completion. Events march faster than us, do what we will! and as the child never comes up with the hoop he has set in motion, 'till it has fallen, so we rarely overtake the circumstances we have created till they have ceased to be of any value to us. Now, at this precise moment I want to be in the Vatican, at the camp of Goito—in the council-chamber at Schönbrun—not to speak of a certain humble homestead in a far-away Irish county—and yet I have nothing for it but to go quietly off to bed, leaving to Fortune—I believe that is as good a name for it as any other—the course of events, which, were I present, I could direct at will. Napoleon left a great example behind him; he beat his enemies always by rapidity. Believe me, Morlache, men think pretty much upon a par in this same world of ours; the great difference being, that some take five minutes where others take five weeks—the man of minutes is sure to win."

Just as the Abbé had spoken, Norwood returned, saying:

"By the way, can either of you tell me if Jekyl be here now?"

"I have not seen him," said Morlache, "which is almost proof that he is not. His first visit is usually to me."

The streets were silent; a few stray lamps yet flickered over the spacious cupola of the Duomo, and a broken line of light faintly tracked one angle of the tower of the Piazza Vecchia; but except these last lingering signs of the late rejoicings, all Florence lay in darkness.

"How quiet is everything," said Morlache, as he took leave of his guests at his door. "The streets are empty already."

"Ay," muttered the Abbé, "the rejoicing, like the victory, was but short-lived. Do our roads lie the same way, my Lord?" asked he of Norwood.

"Very seldom, I suspect," replied the Viscount, with a laugh. "*Mine* is in this direction."

"And *mine* lies this way," said D'Esmonde, bowing coldly, but courteously, as he passed on, and entered the narrow street beyond the bridge. "You are quite right, my Lord, muttered he to himself. Our paths in life are very different. *Yours* may be wider and pleasanter, but *mine*, with all its turnings, goes straighter." He paused and listened for some seconds, till Norwood's steps had died away in the distance, and then turning back, he followed in the direction the other had taken.

Norwood walked rapidly along till he came to that small house on the Arno, where Jekyl lived, and stopping in front of it, he threw a handful of sand against the window. To this signal, twice repeated, no reply was given to the Viscount. He waited a few seconds, and then moved on. The Abbé stood under the shadow of the tall palaces till the other was out of sight, and then, approaching the door, gave a long, low whistle. Within a few seconds the sash was opened, and Jekyl's voice heard:

"It's you, Abbé. There's the key. Will you excuse ceremony, and let yourself in?"

D'Esmonde opened the door at once, and mounting the stairs, entered the little chamber in which now Jekyl stood in his dressing-gown and slippers, and, although suddenly roused from sleep, with a smile of courteous welcome on his diminutive features:

"I paid no attention to your first signal, Abbé," said he, "scarcely thinking it could be you."

"Nor was it," said D'Esmonde, seating himself. "It was Lord Norwood, who doubtless must have had some important reason for disturbing you at this hour. I waited till he went off before I whistled. When did you arrive?"

"About three hours ago. I came from Lucerne, and was obliged to take such a zig-zag course, the roads being all blocked up by marching

soldiers, guns, and waggons, that I have been eight days making the journey of three."

"So, Lady Hester is a widow! Strange, I only heard it an hour ago."

"The Post has been interrupted, or you would have known it a week back. I wrote to you from Zurich. I accompanied her so far on her way to England, and was to have gone the whole way, too, but she determined to send me back here."

"Not to settle her affairs in Florence," said D'Esmonde, with a quiet slyness.

"Rather to look after Lord Norwood's," said Jekyl. "I never could exactly get to the bottom of the affair; but I suppose there must be some pledge or promise, which, in a rash moment, she has made him, and that already she repents of."

"How has she been left in the will?" asked D'Esmonde, abruptly.

"Her own words are, 'Infamously treated.' Except a bequest of ten thousand pounds, nothing beyond the Irish estate settled at the time of her marriage."

"She will easily get rid of Norwood, then," rejoined the Abbé, with a smile. "His price is higher."

"I'm not so sure of that," broke in Jekyl; "the noble Viscount's late speculations have all proved unfortunate—even to his book on Carlo Alberto. He thinks he has gone wrong in not hedging on Radetzky."

"What does he know of the changes of politics?" said D'Esmonde, contemptuously. "Let him stick to his stable-men and the crafty youths of Newmarket, but leave State affairs for other and very different capacities. Does she care for him, Jekyl? Does she love him?"

"She does, and she does not," said Jekyl, with a languishing air, which he sometimes assumed when asked for an opinion. "She likes his fashionable exterior, his easy kind of drawing-room assurance, and, perhaps not least of all, the tone of impertinent superiority he displays towards all other men; but she is afraid of him,—afraid of his temper and his tyrannical humour, and terribly afraid of his extravagance."

"How amusing it is," said D'Esmonde, with a yawn. "A Minister quits the Cabinet in disgust, and retires into private life for ever, when his first step is to plot his return to power; so your widow invariably is found weighing the thoughts of her mourning with speculations on a second husband. Why need she marry again; tell me that?"

"Because she is a widow, perhaps. I know no other reason," lisped out Jekyl.

"I cannot conceive a greater folly than that of these women, with nple fortune, sacrificing their independence by marriage. The whole orld is their own, if they but knew it. They command every source of ıjoyment while young, and have all the stereotyped solaces of old age hen it comes upon them; and with poodles, parrots, and parasites, morngs of scandal, and evenings of whist, eke out a very pretty existence."

"Dash the whole with a little religion, Abbé," cried Jekyl, laughing, and the picture will be tolerably correct."

"She shall not marry Lord Norwood; that, at least, I can answer ır," said D'Esmonde, not heeding the other.

"It will be difficult to prevent it, Abbé," said the other, dryly.

"Easier than you think for. Come, Master Jekyl, assume a serious ood for once, and pay attention to what I am about to say. This ıe of life you lead cannot go on for ever. Even were your own great fts to resist time and its influences, a new generation will spring up ith other wants and requirements, and another race will come who ıew not Joseph. With all your versatility, it will be late to study new odels, and acquire a new tongue. Have you speculated, then, I ask ɔu, on this contingency?"

"I've some thoughts of a 'Monkery,'" lisped out Jekyl; "if the ɔod folk could only be persuaded to adopt a little cleanliness."

"Would not marriage suit you better; a rich widow,—titled, well ɔnnected, and good-looking,—of fashionable habits, and tastes that semble your own?"

"There are difficulties in the case," said Jekyl, calmly.

"State them," rejoined the Abbé.

"To begin. There is Lady Hester herself—for, of course, you ean *her*."

"I engage to solve all on that head."

"Then there is the Viscount."

"For him, too, I hold myself responsible."

"Lastly, there is Albert Jekyl, who, however admirably he underands Garçon life, might discover that the husband was not among the nge of his characters. As it is, my dear Abbé, I lead a very pretty istence. I am neither bored nor tormented, I never quarrel with any ıdy, nor is the rudest man ever discourteous to *me*. I possess nothing at any one envies, except that heaven-born disposition to be pleased, which nothing can rob me. I dine well, drive in rich equipages, and, I liked, might ride the best horses; have at least a dozen Opera-boxes ady to receive me, and sweeter smiles to welcome me than would beıme me to boast of."

"Well, then, my proposal is, to give you all these on a life interest, instead of being a tenant-at-will," broke in D'Esmonde.

"And all this out of pure regard for me?" asked Jekyl, with a sly look.

"As a pure matter of bargain," replied D'Esmonde. "Lady Hester has advanced large sums to the cause in which I am interested. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to repay them. We still want means, and that ten thousand pounds legacy would render us immense service at this moment. Her income can well spare the sacrifice."

"Yes, yes," said Jekyl, musingly; and then looking fondly at his own image in the glass, he said, "I shall be a dead bargain after all."

D'Esmonde bit his lip to repress some movement of impatience, and after a pause said,

"This matter does not admit of delay. Circumstances will soon require my presence in England, and with a strong sum at my command; besides——"

"If I understand you aright," said Jekyl, "you are to conduct the whole negotiations to a successful end, and that I shall have neither a bill to endorse, nor a duel to fight throughout the affair."

"You shall be scathless."

"There is another point," said Jekyl, quickly. "How shall I figure in the newspapers—Albert Jekyl, Esquire, of where? Have you thought of that? I wish I had even an uncle a Baronet?"

"Pooh, pooh!" said D'Esmonde, impatiently. "You marry into the Peerage—that's quite enough."

"Perhaps you're right," said Jekyl. "All that enumeration of family connexion—'niece to the Chief Justice of Bembouk,'—'or cousin-german to the Vice Consul at Gumdallooo'—smacks terribly of 'Moses and Son.'"

"We are agreed, then?" said the Abbé, rising.

"I swear," said Jekyl, rising and throwing out his hand in the attitude of the well-known picture of the "Marshals." "The step that I am about to take will throw its gloom over many a dinner-party, and bring sadness into many a *salon*; but I'll retire at least with dignity, and, like Napoleon, I'll write my memoirs."

"So far, then, so good," said D'Esmonde; "now, with your leave, I'll throw myself on this sofa and snatch an hour's sleep." And ere Jekyl had arranged the folds of what he called his *sable pelisse*, as a covering, the Abbé was in deep slumber.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PRIESTCRAFT.

WITH less than two hours of sleep, D'Esmonde arose refreshed and ready for the day. Jekyl was not awake as the Priest quitted his quarters, and, repairing to his own lodgings, dressed himself with more than usual care. Without any of the foppery of the Abbé, there was a studied elegance in every detail of his costume, and, as he stepped into the carriage which awaited him, many turned their looks of admiration at the handsome Priest.

"To the Crocetto," said he, and away they went.

It was already so early, that few persons were about, as they drove into the court of the Palace, and drew up at a private door. Here D'Esmonde got out and ascended the stairs.

"Ah, Monsignore!" said a young man, somewhat smartly attired in a dressing-gown and velvet cap. "He did not return here, last night."

"Indeed!" said the Abbé, pondering.

"He dismissed the carriage at the Pitti, so that in all likelihood he passed the night at the Palace."

"Most probably," said D'Esmonde, with a bland smile; and then, with a courteous "Good morning," he returned to his carriage.

"Where to, Signore?" asked the driver.

"Towards the Duomo," said he. But scarcely had the man turned the second corner, than he said, "To the 'Moskova,' Prince Midchikoff's Villa."

"We're turning our back to it, Signore. It's on the hill of Fiesole."

D'Esmonde nodded, but said no more. Although scarcely a league from the city, the way occupied a considerable time, being one continued and steep ascent. The Abbé was, however, too deeply engaged with his own thoughts to bestow attention on the pace they journeyed, or the scene around. He was far from being insensible to the influence of the picturesque or the beautiful; but now other and weightier considerations completely engrossed his mind, nor was he aware how the moments passed till the carriage came to a stop.

"The Prince is absent, Sir, in Lombardy," said a gruff-looking porter from within the gate.

D'Esmonde descended, and whispered some words between the bars.

"But my orders—my orders!" said the man, in a tone of deference.

"They would be peremptory against any other than *me*," said D'Es-

monde, calmly; and, after a few seconds' pause, the man unlocked the gate, and the carriage passed in.

"To the back entrance," called out D'Esmonde. And they drove into a spacious court-yard, where a number of men were engaged in washing carriages, cleaning horses, and all the other duties of the stable. One large and cumbrous vehicle, loaded with all the varied "accessories" of the road, and fortified by many a precaution against the accidents of the way, stood prominent. It was covered with stains and splashes, and bore unmistakeable evidence of a long journey. A Courier, with a red-brown beard descending to his breast, was busy in locking and unlocking the boxes, as if in search for some missing article.

"How heavy the roads are in the North," said D'Esmonde, addressing him in German.

The man touched his cap in a half sullen civility, and muttered an assent.

"I once made the same journey myself, in winter," resumed the Abbé, "and I remember thinking that no man undergoes such real hardship as a Courier. Sixteen, seventeen—aye, twenty days and nights of continued exposure to cold and snows, and yet obliged to have all his faculties on full stretch the whole time—to remember every post station, every bridge and ferry—the steep mountain passes, where oxen must be hired—the frontiers of provinces, where passports are vised."

"Aye, and when the lazy officials will keep you standing in the deep snow a full hour at midnight, while they ring every copeck to see it be good money."

"That's the true and only metal for a coinage," said D'Esmonde, as he drew forth a gold Napoleon, and placed it in the other's hand. "Take it, my worthy fellow," said he, "it's part of a debt I owe to every man who wears the Courier's jacket. Had it not been for one of *your* cloth, I'd have been drowned at the ford of Ostrovitsch."

"It's the worst ferry in the Empire," said the Courier. "The Emperor himself had a narrow escape there. The raft is one-half too small."

"How many days have you taken on the way?" asked D'Esmonde, carelessly.

"Twenty-eight—yesterday would have made the twenty-ninth—but we arrived before noon."

"Twenty-eight days!" repeated D'Esmonde, pondering.

"Aye, and nights too! But, remember that Vradskoi Notski is three hundred and eighty versts below St. Petersburg."

"I know it well," said D'Esmonde, "and with a heavily loaded car-

riage it's a weary road. How did she bear the journey?" said he, in a low, scarcely uttered whisper.

"Bear it!—better than I did; and, except when scolding the postilions for not going twelve versts an hour, in deep snow, she enjoyed herself the entire way."

D'Esmonde gave a knowing look and a smile, as though to say that he recognised her thoroughly in the description.

"You know her, then?" asked the Courier.

"This many a year," replied the Abbé, with a faint sigh.

"She's a rare one," said the man, who grew at each instant more confidential, "and thinks no more of a gold rouble than many another would of a copeck. Is it true, as they say, she was once an actress?"

"There are stranger stories than that about her," said D'Esmonde. "But why has she come alone? How happens it that she is here?"

"That is the secret that none of us can fathom," said the Courier. "We thought there was to have been another, and I believe there is another in the passport, but it was no affair of mine. I had my orders from the Prince's own 'Intendant,' who bespoke all the relays for the road, and here we are."

"I will explain all the mystery to you at another time, Courier," said D'Esmonde; "meanwhile, let nothing of what we have been saying escape you. By the way," added he, half carelessly, "what name did she travel under?"

"The passport was made out 'Die Gräfin von Dalton;' but she has a Spanish name, for I heard it once from the Intendant."

"Was it Lola de Seviglia?"

"That was it. I remember it well."

"We are very old friends indeed!" said the Abbé; "and now be cautious; let none know that we have spoken together, and I can serve your fortune hereafter."

The German scarcely looked quite satisfied with himself for the confidence he had been unwittingly led into; "but, after all," thought he, "the Priest knew more than I could tell him," and so, he resumed his search without further thought of the matter.

As for D'Esmonde, his first care was to inquire for Monsieur de Grasse, the Prince's Chief Secretary, with whom he remained closeted for nigh an hour. It will not be necessary to inflict all the detail of that interview on the reader; enough, that we state its substance to have been a pressing entreaty on the part of D'Esmonde to be admitted to an audience of the Prince, as firmly resisted by the Secretary, whose orders were not to admit any one, nor, indeed, acknowledge that his Highness was then there.

"You must wait upon him at the Crocetto, Monsignore," said De Grasse. "Your presence here will simply cause the dismissal of those who have admitted you, and yet never advance your own wishes in the least."

"My business is too urgent, Sir, to be combated by reasons so weak as these," replied D'Esmonde; "nor am I much accustomed to the air of an ante-chamber."

"You must yet be aware, Monsignore, that the orders of Prince Mikhailoff are absolute in his own house." The Secretary dropped his voice almost to a whisper as he finished this sentence, for he had just overheard the Prince speaking to some one, without, and could detect his step as he came along the corridor.

With a look of most meaning entreaty he besought the Abbé to keep silence, while he crept noiselessly over and turned the key. D'Esmonde uttered an exclamation of anger, and, sweeping past a window, within which stood a magnificent vase of malachite, he caught the costly object in the wide folds of his gown, and dashed it to the ground in a thousand pieces. De Grasse gave a sudden cry of horror, and at the same instant Mikhailoff knocked at the door, and demanded admittance. With faltering hand the Secretary turned the key, and the Prince entered the room, casting his eyes from D'Esmonde to the floor, where the fragments lay, and back again to the Priest, with a significance that showed how he interpreted the whole incident. As for the Abbé, he looked as coldly indifferent to the accident, as though it were the veriest trifle he had destroyed.

"I came to have a few moments interview with you, Prince," said he, calmly; "can you so far oblige me?"

"I am entirely at your orders, Monsignore," said the Russian, with a faint smile. "Allow me to conduct you to a chamber in less disorder than this one."

The Abbé bowed, and followed him, not seeming to hear the allusion. And now, passing through a number of rooms, whose gorgeous furniture was carefully covered, they reached a small chamber opening upon a conservatory, where a breakfast-table was already spread.

"I will waste neither your time nor my own, Prince, by an apology for the hour of this visit, nor the place; my business did not admit of delay—that will excuse me in your eyes."

The Prince gave a cold bow, but never spoke.

D'Esmonde resumed. "I have heard the news from the camp: Lord Norwood tells me that the Austrians have fallen back, and with a heavy loss, too."

"Not heavy!" said the Russian, with a smile.

"Enough, however, to raise the hopes and strengthen the courage of the others. Goito was, at least, a victory." A faint shrug of the shoulders was the only reply the Prince made, and the Abbé went on. "Things are too critical, Prince, to treat the event slightingly. We cannot answer either for France or England; still less can we rely on the politicians of Vienna. A second or a third reverse, and who can say that they will not treat for a peace, at the cost of half the states of Lombardy. Nay, Sir, I am not speaking without book," added he, more warmly; "I know—I repeat it—I know that such a negotiation has been entertained, and that, at this moment, the Cabinet of England has the matter in its consideration."

"It may be so," said the Prince, carelessly, as he poured out his coffee.

"Then there is not a moment to be lost," cried the Abbé, impetuously. "A cession of the Milanais means a Republic of Upper Italy—the downfal of the Popedom—the rule of Infidelity over the Peninsula. Are *we*—are *you* prepared for this? Enough has been done to show that Italian 'Unity' is a fiction. Let us complete the lesson, by proving that they cannot meet the Austrian in arms. The present generation, at least, will not forget the chastisement, if it be but heavy enough."

"We may leave that task to the Imperialists," said the Prince, with a cold smile.

"I do not think so. I know too much of German sluggishness and apathy. The reinforcements, that should pour in like a flood, creep lazily along. The dread of France—the old terror of those wars that once crushed them—is still uppermost. They know not how far Europe will permit them to punish a rebellious province; and, while they hesitate, they give time for the growth of that public opinion that will condemn them."

"Perhaps you are right," said the Russian, as he sipped his coffee carelessly.

"And if I be," cried D'Esmonde, passionately, "are we to sit tranquilly here, till the ruin overtake us? Will Russia wait till the flame of a Red Republic throws its lurid glare over Europe, and even gleam over the cold waters of the Neva? Is it her wish, or to her benefit, that the flag of the Democrat and the Infidel is to float over the Continent?"

"You conjured up the monster yourself, Monsignore. It is for you to order him back to the depths he came from."

"And we are ready for the task," said the Priest. "We fostered this revolt, because we saw it was better to lop off a diseased limb than to suffer the gangrene to spread over the entire body; better to cast

down into utter perdition the wild Democrats, who but half believed in, thus peril the countless millions of true Catholics. Nay, more, we ask with your counsel and concurrence. That revolt has already borne its fruits. Men see no issue to the struggle they are engaged in. The men of moderation are overborne by the wild clamour of the factious. Anarchy is amongst them, and now is our moment to bid the contest cease, and earn from mankind the glorious epithet of 'Peacemaker.' The tide of victory once turned, see how the mind of Europe will turn with it. Good wishes are prone to go with the battalions that advance."

"Good wishes are not too costly a sympathy," said the Russian, coolly.

"It is to that point I am coming, Prince," said the Abbé; "nor have I intruded myself on your privacy to-day merely to discuss the public opinion of Europe. The whole of this question lies in a narrow compass. It is time that this struggle should cease—it is, at least, time that the tide of conquest should turn. Were Austria free to use her strength, we might trust the issue to herself, but she is not, and we must help her. I hold here the means," said he, placing on the table a heavy pocket-book crammed with letters. "This," said he, taking up one large sealed packet, "is an autograph from his Holiness, commanding Durando to halt at the Po, and under no circumstances to cross the frontier. This," continued he, showing another, "is to Ghirardi, to grant leave of absence to all officers who desire to return to their homes. This is to Krasaletzki, to provide for the disbandment of his legion. The King of Naples waits but for the signal to recal General Pepe and his contingent, fifteen thousand strong. And now, Prince, there is but one other voice in Europe we wait for—the Czar's!"

"His Imperial Majesty has ever wished well to the cause of order," said the Russian, with a studied calm of manner.

"Away with such trifling as this," said D'Esmonde, passionately; "nor do not try to impose on me by those courteous generalities that amuse cabinets. Russia speaks to Western Europe best by her gold. The 'Rouble' can come where the 'Cossack' cannot! There are men with those armies that comprehend no other argument—whose swords have their price. Our treasuries are exhausted; the sacred vessels of our altars—the golden ornaments of our shrines—are gone. You alone can aid us at this moment. It is no barren generosity, Prince! You are combatting your Poles more cheaply beside the Po and the Adige than on the banks of the Vistula! You are doing more! You are breaking up those ancient alliances of Europe whose existence excluded you from continental power! You are buying your freedom to sit down among the

rulers of the Old World, and accustoming the nations of the West to the voice of the Boyard in their councils! And, greatest of all, you are crushing into annihilation that spirit of revolt that now rages like a pestilence. But why do I speak of these things to one like you? You know full well the terms of the compact. Your own handwriting has confessed it."

Midchikoff gave a slight—a very slight movement of surprise, but never spoke.

"Yes," continued D'Esmonde, "I have within that pocket-book at this moment the receipt of Count Grünenburg, the Austrian Secretary-at-War, for the second instalment of a loan advanced by Prince Midchikoff to the Imperial Government. I have a copy of the order in council acknowledging in terms of gratitude the aid, and recommending that the cross of St. Stephen should be conferred on the illustrious lender. And, less gracious than these," added he, with sarcastic bitterness, "I have the record of the Emperor's scruples about according the first-class order of the Empire to one whose nobility was but left-handed. Were these to appear to-morrow in the columns of the "*Razionale*," is it only your pride as a Prince that would be humbled? Or, think you, that a single stone would rest upon another in this gorgeous edifice where we are standing? Who or what could restrain an infuriated populace from wreaking their vengeance on the traitor? Who would lift a hand against the pillage of this splendour, and the desecration of this magnificence? It is not willingly that I tell you these things, nor had I ever spoken of them, if you but heard me with fitting attention. I know, too, the price at which they are uttered. We never can be friends: but that is of small moment. Our cause—ours, I say—for it is yours no less than mine—is above such consideration."

"How much do you require?" said Midchikoff, as he leaned his arm on the chimney-piece, and stared calmly at the Abbé.

"Ghirardi and his staff demand two hundred thousand francs; Albizi will be a cheaper bargain. Marrionetti and his force will be surrounded, and retire from Lombardy on parole of not serving during the campaign—he only asks enough to emigrate with. Then, there is the Commissary of the Crociati—he is quite ready to become his own paymaster. There are others of inferior rank and pretensions, with whom I shall treat personally. The Press, particularly of England, will be the difficulty; but its importance is above all price. The public mind must be brought back, from its sympathy for a People, to regard the Rulers more favourably. Anarchy and misrule must be displayed in their most glaring colours. The Crociati will do us good service here; their crimes would sully a holier crusade than this! But I weary you, Sir,"

said the Abbé, stopping suddenly, and observing that Midchikoff, instead of seeming to listen, was busily occupied in writing.

"Moslesbe holds bills of mine to this amount," said the Prince, showing a list of several large sums; "he will place them at your disposal on your giving a receipt for them. This is an order, also, regarding certain emeralds I had commissioned him to have mounted in gold. He need not do so, but will dispose of the gems, as I shall not want them." A very slight flush here coloured his cheek, and he paused as if some bitter thought had crossed his mind.

D'Esmonde's quick eye read the meaning of the expression, and he said, "Am I to congratulate your Highness on the approach of a certain happy event?"

"His Majesty has not deigned to accord me the necessary permission," was the reply.

"Then I will be bold enough to say I congratulate you," cried D'Esmonde. "Your alliance should be with a royal house, Prince. *Your* position in Europe is exceptional; such should be *your* marriage. Besides, the day is not very distant when there must come another dissection of the map of Europe. There will be new principalities, but wanting heads to rule them. The world is tired of Cobourgs, and would gladly see another name amongst its royalties."

"I am at the disposal of my Emperor," said Midchikoff, coldly; for whatever effect the flatteries might produce within, neither his words nor his looks would betray it, and now by his manner he showed that he wished the interview over.

"Mademoiselle, then, returns to her family?" asked D'Esmonde.

"To the care of the Count von Auersberg."

"The reputation of having once attracted your Highness will be a fortune to her."

"She has refused a settlement of eighty thousand roubles a year."

"A most princely offer!" cried D'Esmonde.

"His Majesty fixed the sum," said Midchikoff, as coolly as though talking of an indifferent matter.

D'Esmonde now rose to take his leave, but there was a reluctance in his manner that showed he was unwilling to go. At last he said, "Does your Highness intend to return to the camp?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"I ask," said the Abbé, "inasmuch as I am hourly in expectation of hearing from Cardinal Maraffa, with reference to a certain decoration, which you should long since have received——"

"Indeed! Has his Holiness been pleased to consider me amongst his most ardent well-wishers?" cried the Prince, interrupting.

"I may be in a position to assure your Highness on that score before another day elapses. May I hope that you will receive me—even at some inconvenience—for my time is much occupied just now?"

"Whenever you call, Monsieur l'Abbé," was the prompt reply. "If you will deign to accept this ring as a souvenir of me, it will also serve to admit you at all hours, and in all places, to me."

"Your costly gift, Prince," said D'Esmonde, flushing, "has a greater value in my eyes than all its lustre can express." And with a most affectionate leave-taking they parted.

"At what hour is the Prince's carriage ordered?" said the Abbé, as he passed through the hall.

"For two o'clock precisely, Monsignore. He is to have an audience at the Pitti."

"To Florence—and with speed!" said D'Esmonde to his coachman, and away they drove.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE "MOSKOVA."

THE Abbé D'Esmonde passed a busy morning. Twice was he closeted with the President of the Ministry, and once was he received in a lengthy audience at the "Pitti;" after which he repaired to the house of Morlache, where he remained till after two o'clock.

"There goes Midchikoff to the Palace!" said the Jew, as a handsome equipage drove past.

"Then it is time for me to be away," said D'Esmonde, rising. "I have received orders to meet him there. Remember, Morlache, I must have this sum in gold, ready by the evening—the bills on London can reach me by post."

"All shall be attended to," said Morlache; and the Abbé entered his carriage once more, giving orders for the Pitti.

When the carriage had passed the first turning, however, D'Esmonde appeared suddenly to have remembered something that till then had escaped him, and he desired the man to drive round to the San Gallo gate; thence, he directed his way to the narrow road which traverses the valley of the Mugello, and winds along for miles at the foot of the hill of Fiesole. Once outside the city, D'Esmonde urged the man to speed, and they drove for nigh an hour at a rapid pace.

"There is a footpath somewhere hereabouts leads to Frisole," said

D'Esmonde, springing out, and casting his
Remain here till I come down. I may be a
but be sure to wait for me." And so sayin
beside the road, and was soon lost to view.

The pathway was steep and rugged; bu
with an active step, scarcely seeming to best
calties, in the deeper preoccupation of his mi
the peasant greetings that met him, or hear t
him "good day" as he went. If at intervals
was rather to take breath, and to recruit vig
look down upon the gorgeous scene that now
instant, however, his thoughts did stray to
he beheld the dark towers of a gloomy ca
amongst tall yew-trees, he muttered.

"Deeper and darker schemes than mine
—and what fruits have they borne after all
age they lived in, have never left an impress
aught that we know or feel, the Medici mig
this," cried he, aloud, "because theirs was a
but one cause whose interests are eternal—
creation which combines power, here, with tr

His face, as he uttered the words, was no
[illegible] a high and noble brow, lit up by the
[illegible] and beneath, eyes of changeful and tr
[illegible] again, in the compressed lips and
[illegible] of an unrelenting spirit.

Passing along through many a tortuous
[illegible] gate, which led into the ground
[illegible] him for a moment of the w
gardens, but he soon remembered the dire
was the hour when in Italy the whole face
[illegible] —are deserted, and a
[illegible] that of midnight, prevails. The glow
[illegible] "siesta," and not a labourer wa

D'Esmonde found the garden unlocked, an
by passing directly onward to the "Orangery
by a small door, which led into the private
This was, however, locked, but the window l
he gained the sill, and entered the chamber.
the little room appropriated by Midchikoff as
furnished, and connected with a still small
alcove, a species of divan stood, on which it w

at times to pass the night. Although certain traces showed that the Prince had been recently there, no letters nor papers lay about; there was no sign of haste or negligence, nor was anything left to the accidents of prying eyes or meddling fingers. D'Esmonde opened the door which conducted into the corridor, and listened; but all was silent. He then sat down to think. The Palace—for such, under the name of Villa, it was—was of immense extent, and he could not expect to ramble many minutes without chancing upon some of the household. His colour came and went, as, in deep agitation, he conceived in turn every possible project, for he was one whose mind worked with all the violent throes of some mighty engine; and even when taking counsel with himself, the alternate impulses of his reason became painful efforts. At last, he made up his resolve, and, entering the inner chamber, he closed the shutters, and drew the curtains, and then, throwing around his shoulders a richly-lined cloak of sable, he rung the bell loudly and violently. This done, he lay down upon the divan, which, in the darkness of the recess, was in complete obscurity. He had barely time to draw the folds of the mantle about him, when a servant entered, with noiseless step, and stood at a respectful distance, awaiting what he believed to be his master's orders.

"Send the Signora," muttered D'Esmonde, with the cloak folded across his mouth, and then turned on his side. The servant bowed, and retired.

D'Esmonde started up, and listened to the retiring footfalls, till they were lost in distance, and then the strong pulsations of his own heart seemed to mock their measured pace. "Would the stratagem succeed?" "Would she come, and come alone?" were the questions which he asked himself, as his clasped hands were clenched, and his lip quivered in strong emotion. An unbroken stillness succeeded, so long that, to his aching senses, it seemed like hours of time. At last, a heavy door was heard to bang—another, too—now, voices might be detected in the distance; then, came footsteps, it seemed, as of several people; and, lastly, these died away, and he could mark the sweeping sounds of a female dress coming rapidly along the corridor. The door opened and closed—she was in the library, and appeared to be waiting. D'Esmonde gave a low, faint cough, and now, hastily passing on, she entered the inner chamber, and, with cautious steps traversing the darkened space, she knelt down beside the couch. D'Esmonde's hand lay half uncovered, and on this now another hand was gently laid. Not a word was uttered by either; indeed, their very breathings seemed hushed into stillness.

If the secrets of hearts were open to us, what a history, what a life-

long experience lay in those brief moments! and what a conflict of passion might be read in those two natures! A slight shudder shook D'Esmonde's frame at the touch of that hand, which so often had been clasped within his own, long, long ago, and he raised it tenderly, and pressed it to his lips. Then, passing his other arm around her, so as to prevent escape, he said, but in a voice barely audible, the one word, "Lola!"

With a violent effort she tried to disengage herself from his grasp; and although her struggles were great, not a cry, not a syllable escaped her.

"Hear me, Lola," said D'Esmonde; "hear me with patience and with calm, if not for my sake, for your own."

"Unhand me, then," said she, in a voice which, though low, was uttered with all the vehemence of strong emotion. "I am not a prisoner beneath this roof."

"Not a prisoner, say you?" said D'Esmonde, as he locked the door, and advanced towards her. "Can there be any bondage compared to this? Does the world know of any slavery so debasing?"

"Dare to utter such words again, and I will call to my aid those who will hurl you from that window," said she, in the same subdued accents. "That priestly robe will be but a poor defence, here."

"You'd scarcely benefit by the call, Lola," said D'Esmonde, as he stole one hand within the folds of his robe.

"Would you kill me?" cried she, growing deathly pale.

"Be calm, and hear me," said the Priest, as he pressed her down upon a seat, and took one directly opposite to her. "It never could be my purpose, Lola, to have come here either to injure or revile you. I may, indeed, sorrow over the fall of one whose honourable ambitions might have soared so high—I may grieve for a ruin that was so causeless—but, save when anguish may wring from me a word of bitterness, I will not hurt your ears, Lola. I know everything—all that has happened—yet have I to learn who counselled you to this flight."

"Here was my adviser—here!" said she, pressing her hand firmly against her side. "My heart, bursting and indignant—my slighted affection—my rejected love! You ask me this—*you*, who knew how I loved him."

For some seconds her emotion overcame her, and, as she covered her face with her hands, swayed and rocked from side to side, like one in acute bodily pain.

"I stooped to tell him all—how I had thought and dreamed of him—how followed his footsteps—sought out the haunts that he frequented—and loved to linger in the places where he had been. I told him,

too, of one night when I had even ventured to seek him in his own chamber, and was nearly detected by another who chanced to be there; my very dress was torn in my flight. There was no confession too humiliating for my lips to utter, nor my pen to trace; and what has been the return? But why do I speak of these things to one whose heart is sealed againt affection, and whose nature rejects the very name of love. You will be a merciless judge, Eustace!"

"Go on; let me hear you out, Lola," said the Priest, gently.

"The tale is soon told," rejoined she, hurriedly. "My letter reached him on the eve of a great battle. The army, it appears, had been marching for weeks, and suddenly came upon the enemy without expecting it. He told me so much in about as many words, and said that he was passing what might perhaps prove his last hours of life in replying to me. 'Outnumbered and outmanœuvred, nothing remains but to sell our lives dearly, and even in our defeat make the name of Englishmen one of terror to our enemies.' So he wrote, and so I could have read, with a swelling, but not a breaking heart, had he not added, that, for my warm affection, my whole soul's devotion, he had nothing but his friendship to give in return—that his heart had long since been another's, and that, although she never could be his—never in all likelihood know of his affection—he would die with her name upon his lips, her image in his heart. 'It matters little,' added he, 'in what channel flow the feelings of one, where to-morrow in all likelihood the course will be dried up for ever. Let me, however, with what may be the last lines I shall ever write, thank you—nay, bless you—for one passage of your letter, and the thought of which will nerve my heart in the conflict now so near, and make me meet my last hour with an unbroken spirit.' The mystery of these words I never could penetrate, nor have I the slightest clue to their meaning. But why should I care for them? Enough that I am slighted, despised, and rejected! This letter came to my hands six weeks ago. I at once wrote to the Prince Midchikoff, telling him that the woman he was about to marry loved, and was loved by, another; that she entertained no feeling towards himself but of dread and terror. I told him, too, that her very beauty would not withstand the inroads of a sorrow that was corroding her heart. He replied to me, and I wrote again. I was now his confidant, and he told me all. How, that he had addressed a formal demand to the Emperor for leave to marry, and how, he had taken safe measures to have his prayer rejected. Then came the tidings of the Czar's refusal to Madame de Heidendorf, and *my* triumph; for I told her, and to her face, that, once more, we were equals. It was, stung by this taunt, that she refused to travel with me—refused to accept the splendid dowry to which her betrothal entitled her, and demanded

to be restored to her family and friends, poor as she had left them. It was then that I mustered on this dark step. I had long been learning the falsehood of what are called friends, and how he who would achieve fortune must trust to himself alone. Michikoff might not love me, but there was much in my power to secure his affection. My head could be as fertile in schemes as his own. I had seen much, and heard more. The petty plottings of the Heidenhorst, and the darker counsels of the Abbé D'Esmonde, were all known to me——"

"You did not dare to write my name?" asked the Priest, in a slow, deliberate voice.

"And why should I not?" cried she, haughtily. "Is it fear, or left gratitude should hold my hand?"

"You forget the past, Lola, or you had never said these words."

"I remember it but as a troubled dream, which I will not suffer to darken my waking hours. At last I begin to live, and never till now have I known the sensation of being above fear."

"You told the Prince, then, of our relations together? You showed him my letters, and your own replies?" said D'Esmonde, as he fixed his dark eyes upon her.

"All—all!" said she, with a haughty smile.

"You, perhaps, told him that I had engaged you to write to me all you heard or saw at St. Petersburg?"

"I said so, in a most unpolished phrase: I called myself a Spy."

"You were probably not less candid when designating your friends, Lola," said D'Esmonde, with a faint smile. "How, pray, did you name *me*?"

"It was a better word,—one of cutting reproach, believe me," said she. "I called you a 'Priest,' Sir; do you think there is another epithet can contain as much?"

"In the overflowing of those frank impulses, Lola, of course you spoke of Norwood—of Gerald Acton, I mean, as you may remember him better under that name;—you told the Prince of your marriage to this Englishman—a marriage solemnised by myself, and of which I retain the written evidence."

"With the falsehood that for a brief moment imposed upon myself, I would not stoop to cheat another! No, Eustace, this may be Priestcraft. To outlive a deception, and then employ it; to tremble at a fallacy first, and to terrorise by means of it after, is excellent Popery, but most sorry Womanhood!"

"Unhappy, wretched creature!" cried D'Esmonde; "where have you learned these lessons?—who could have taught you this?"

"You,—and you alone, Eustace. In reading *your* nature, I unread

my own faith. In seeing your falsehood, I learned to believe there was no truth anywhere. I asked myself, what must be the religion if this man be its interpreter?"

"Hold—hold!" cried D'Esmonde, passionately. "It is not to such as you I can render account of my actions, nor lay bare the secret workings of my heart. Know this much, however, woman, and ponder over it well, that if a man like me can make shipwreck of his whole nature, crush his hopes, and blast his budding affections, the Cause that exacts the sacrifice must needs be Holy. Bethink you that my goal is not like *yours*. I have not plotted for a life of inglorious ease. I have not schemed to win a pampered and voluptuous existence. It is not in a whirlwind of passionate enjoyment I have placed the haven of my hopes. You see me —as I have ever been—poor, meanly housed, and meanly fed,—not repining at my lot either, not deeming my condition a hard one. Why am I thus, then? Are the prizes that worldly men contend for above *my* reach? Am I the inferior of those who are carrying away the great rewards of life? Where is the stain of falsehood in all this?"

"Were I to copy the picture and paint myself in the same colours," said Lola,—"were I to show what I have stooped to—a scoff and a shame!—how I neither faltered at a crime, nor trembled before exposure—all that I might be what I now am!"

"The mistress of a Prince!" said D'Esmonde, with a contemptuous smile.

"Was it a prouder fortune, when my lover was the serge-clad seminarist of Salamanca?" said she, laughing scornfully.

"I linked you with a higher destiny, Lola," said D'Esmonde, deliberately.

"Again you refer to this pretended marriage; but I put no faith in your words; nor, were they even true, should they turn me from my path."

"At least, you should confirm your claim to his name and title," said D'Esmonde. "The rank you will thus attain will but strengthen your position in the world, and they who would treat contemptuously the Toridor's daughter, will show every courtesy and deference to the English Peeress."

"I will hazard nothing on your advice, Priest!" said she, proudly. "I know you as one who never counselled without a scheme of personal advantage. This Acton has injured you. You desire his ruin; or, perhaps, some deep intrigue awaits myself. It matters not: I will not aid you."

"How you misjudge me, Lola," said he, sorrowfully. "I meant by

this act to have repaired many an unconscious wrong, and to have vindicated an affection which the troubled years of life have never been able to efface. Amidst all the cases of great events, when moments are precious as days of ordinary existence, I have come to offer you this last reparation. Think well ere you reject it."

"Not for an instant!" cried she, passionately. "Make weaker minds the tools of your subtle artifices, and leave me to follow my own career."

"I will obey you," said D'Esmonde, with an air of deep humility. "I ask but one favour. As this meeting is unknown to all, never speak of it to Mildchikoff. My name need never pass your lips, nor shall my presence again offend you. Adieu for ever!"

Whether some passing pang of remorse shot through her heart, or that a sudden cause of dread came across her, Lola stood unable to reply, and it was only as he moved away towards the door, that she found strength to say, "Good-by."

"Let me touch that hand for the last time, Lola," said he, advancing towards her.

"No, no—leave me!" cried she, with a sick shudder, and as though his very approach suggested peril.

D'Esmonde bowed submissively, and passed out. With slow and measured steps he traversed the alleys of the garden; but once outside the walls, he hastened his pace; descending the mountain with rapid strides, he gained the road where the carriage waited in less than half an hour.

"To the city!" said he; and, throwing himself back in his seat, drew down the blinds, while, with folded arms and closed eyes, he tasted of, what habit enabled him, at any moment, to command, a refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER XXV.

"VALEGGIO."

THE little village of Valeggio, near the Lago di Guarda, was fixed upon as the spot where the Commissaries of both armies should meet to arrange on the exchange of prisoners. It stood at about an equal distance from their head-quarters, and, although a poor and insignificant hamlet, was conveniently situated for the purpose in hand. Soon after daybreak, the stirring sounds of marching troops awoke the inhabitants, and a half-squadron of Piedmontese Lancers were seen to ride up the narrow street, and, dismounting, to picquet their horses in the little Piazza of the market. Shortly after these came an equal number of Hungarian Hussars, "Radetzky's Own," who drew up in the square before the church; each party seeming carefully to avoid even a momentary contact with the other. Several country carts and waggons lined the street, for, a number of prisoners had arrived the preceding evening, and taken up their quarters in the village, who might now be seen projecting their pale faces and bandaged heads from many a casement, and watching with eager curiosity all that was going forward. About an hour later, an Austrian General, with his staff, rode in from the Peschiera road, while, almost at the very instant, a calèche with four horses dashed up from the opposite direction, conveying the Piedmontese "Commissary."

So accurately timed was the arrival, that they both drew up at the door of the little inn together, and as the one dismounted, the other alighted from his carriage.

The etiquette of precedence, so easily settled in the ordinary course of events, becomes a matter of some difficulty at certain moments, and so the two Generals seemed to feel it, as, while desirous of showing courtesy, each scrupled at what might seem a compromise of his country's dignity. The Austrian officer was a very old man, whose soldierlike air and dignified deportment recalled the warriors of a past century. The other, who was slighter and younger, exhibited an air of easy unconcern, rather smacking of courts than camps, and vouching for a greater familiarity with salons than with soldier life.

They uncovered and bowed respectfully to each other, and then stood, each waiting as it were for the initiative of the other.

"After you, General," said the younger, at length, and with a manner which most courteously expressed the deference he felt for age.

"I must beg *you* to go first, Sir," replied the Austrian. "I stand here

on the territory of my master, and I see in you all that demands the deference due to a guest."

The other smiled slightly, but obeyed without a word; and, ascending the stairs, was followed by the old General into the little chamber destined for their conference. Slight and trivial as this incident was, it is worth mention, as indicating the whole tone of the interview—one characterised by a proud insistance on one side, and a certain plastic deference on the other. The Austrian spoke like one who felt authorised to dictate his terms; while the Piedmontese seemed ready to acquiesce in and accept whatever was proffered. The letters which accredited them to each other lay open on the table; but as this preliminary conversation had not assumed the formal tone of business, neither seemed to know the name or title of the other. In fact, it appeared like a part of the necessary etiquette that they were simply to regard each other as representatives of two powers, neither caring to know or recognise any personal claims.

Lists of names were produced on both sides. Muster-rolls of regiments, showing the precise ranks of individuals, and their standing in the service, all arranged with each care and accuracy as to show that the conference itself was little more than a formality. A case of brevet-rank, or the accident of a staff appointment, might now and then call for a remark or an explanation, but, except at these times, the matter went on in mere routine fashion; a mark of a pencil sufficing to break a captivity, and change the whole fate of a fellow-man!

"Our task is soon ended, Sir," said the Austrian, rising at last. "It would seem that officers on both sides prefer death to captivity in this war."

"The loss has been very great indeed," said the other. "The peculiar uniform of your officers, so distinct from their men, has much exposed them."

"They met their fate honourably at least, Sir; they wore the colours of their Emperor."

"Very true, General," replied the other, "and I will own to you our surprise at the fact that there have been no desertions, except from the ranks. The popular impression was, that many of the Hungarians would have joined the Italian cause. It was even said whole regiments would have gone over."

"It was a base calumny upon a faithful people and a brave soldiery," said the other. "I will not say that such a falsehood may not have blinded their eyes against their truth in their national struggle—the love of country might easily have been used to a base and treacherous purpose—but here, in this conflict, not a man will desert the cause of the Em-

peror!" The emotion in which he spoke these words was such, that he was obliged to turn away his face to conceal it.

"Your words have found an illustration amongst the number of our wounded prisoners, General," said the other,—"a young fellow who, it was said, broke his arrest to join the struggle at Goito, but whose name nor rank we never could find out, for, before being taken, he had torn every mark of his grade from cuff and collar."

"You know his regiment, perhaps?"

"It is said to be Prince Paul of Würtemburg's."

"What is he like—what may be his age?" asked the General, hastily

"To pronounce from appearance, he is a mere boy—brown-haired and blue-eyed, and wears no moustache."

"Where is he, Sir?" asked the old man, with a suppressed emotion.

"In this very village. He was forwarded here last night by a special order of the Duke of Savoy, who has taken a deep interest in his fate, and requested that I should take measures, while restoring him, without exchange, to mention the signal bravery of his conduct."

"The Duke's conduct is worthy of a soldier Prince!" said the General, with feeling, "and, in my master's name, I beg to thank him."

"The youth is at the temporary hospital, but knows nothing of these arrangements for his release. Perhaps the tidings will come more gratefully to his ears from his own countryman."

"It is kindly spoken, Sir; may I have the honour of knowing the name of one who has made this interview so agreeable by his courtesy?"

"My name at this side of the Alps, General, is Count de Valetta; but I have another and better known designation, before I pronounce which, I would gladly enlist in my favour whatever I might of your good opinion."

"All this sounds like a riddle to me, Signor Conte," said the General, "and I am but a plain man, little skilled at unravelling a difficulty."

"I am addressing the General Count von Auersberg?" said the other. "Well, Sir, it was hearing that you were the officer selected for this duty, that induced me to ask I might be appointed also. I have been most anxious to meet you, and, in the accidents of a state of war, knew not how to compass my object."

The old General bowed politely, and waited, with all patience, for further enlightenment.

"My desire for this meeting, General, proceeds from my wish to exculpate myself from what may seem to have been an unqualified wrong done to a member of your family. I am Prince Alexis Midchikoff."

Auersberg started from his chair at the words, and bent a look of

angry indignation at the speaker—an ex
bore with the very calmest unconcern.

"If I am to resume this explanation," s
when you have reseated yourself, and w
quietly."

"And who is to be my guarantee, Sir,
an insult?" cried the old General, passiona
man who has outraged the honour of my l
the customs of your nation, and that you ha
hand in betrothal, without the permission of

"I was certain to obtain it," was the calr

"So certain, that it has been refused—pe

"Very true, General. The refusal came
Nay, Sir. I need not tell you these words con
but hear me patiently before you pronour
them. It came to my knowledge that this
me proceeded entirely from considerations
been greatly influenced by others, and stron
might, at the sacrifice of herself, benefit he
tions were not very flattering to me, pers
overlooked them, trusting to time and fortu
also learned that her affections were bestowe
Englishman, with whom she had been fo
whose picture she possessed, and from whom

"Am I to take this assertion on trust?" c

"By no means, Sir. This is the pictur
letters. I know not if there have been m
whether she has replied to them. It was enou
I had no claim on her affection, and that
only misery on both sides. To have disclo
world would of course have exculpated me,
therefore took what I deemed a more delicat
for the Imperial refusal. I solved a difficulty
involved her in deep reproach." The Princ
the General to speak, but the old man st
stupified, unable to utter a word. At l
"My Master fixed a sum of eighty thousa
once assented, as a settlement on Mademoise
grieve to say, she has peremptorily rejected."

"Has she—has she done this?" cried th
St. Stephen! she is my own dear child fo
there is no disgrace can attach to her."

hoped, Sir," said Midchikoff, "that you might have seen this I did, and that I might have counted on your advocating what measure of justice."

ttle of the extent to which money reparations can atone elings or wounded honour. My life has never supplied ngle lesson on that score. All I see here is, an injury on either Your fault, I think, has been properly expiated; and as for want no other justification than what you have told me. Now, she? When may I see her?"

had given orders for her return to Vienna, with the intention of her under your charge; but some mistake has occurred, and her has been delayed. A second Courier has, however, been hed, and ere this she will have left St. Petersburg."

You have acted well throughout, Prince," said the old General; I shall owe you my gratitude for the remainder of my life; not he delicacy of your reserve, still less for the generous character of intentions, but because you have shown me that this girl has a -hearted sense of honour, and is a thorough Dalton." The old 's eyes filled up with tears, and he had to turn away to hide his tion.

Midchikoff rose to withdraw, affecting to busy himself with the papers the table, while Auersberg was recovering his self-possession. This not, however, seem an easy task, for the old General, forgetting erything save Kate, leaned his head on his hands, and was lost in ought.

The Prince respected his emotion, and withdrew in silence.

So much was the old General von Auersberg absorbed in his interest for Kate, that he had not a thought to bestow upon the immediate affairs before him. It was scarcely a few weeks since he had received a few lines from herself, telling of the Emperor's refusal, and asking for his advice. It needed all his long-pledged devotion to monarchy to enable him to read the lines without an outbreak of passion; and his first impulse was to seek out the man who had so grossly insulted his house, and challenge him to single combat. Later reflection showed him that this would be to arraign the conduct of the Emperor, and to call in question the judgment of a crowned head. While agitated by these opposite considerations, there came another and scarcely less sad epistle to his hand; and if the writer was wanting in those claims to station and rank, which had such hold upon his heart, her touching words and simple style moved him to emotions that for many a year seemed to have lept within him.

"It was Nelly's account of her father's death, told in her own

[illegible]

[illegible] will be made with all the [illegible] heart the own story of him- [illegible] his infancy up- [illegible] know that he never told a lie! [illegible] this calamity—Frank [illegible] why this poison of disaf- [illegible] he will trace out his days of temptation, and [illegible] a shadow of concealment; and if this sad [illegible] Bethink you of his boy- [illegible] burning for some field of glorious enter- [illegible] of personal distinction. How could he [illegible] which agitate the deepest minds of great

thinkers. A mere pretence, a well-painted scene of oppression or sufferance, might easily enlist the sympathies of a boy, whose impulses have more than once made him bestow on the passing beggar the little hoardings of weeks. And yet, with all these, he is not guilty—I never can believe that he could be!—Oh, Sir, you know not as I know, how treason in him would be like a living falsehood; how the act of disloyalty would be the utter denial of all those dreams of future greatness which, over our humble fireside, were his world! To serve the Kaiser—the same gracious master who had rewarded and ennobled our great kinsman—to win honours and distinctions that should rival his; to make our ancient name hold a high place in the catalogue of chivalrous soldiers—these were Frank's ambitions. If you but knew how we, his sisters, weak and timid girls, seeking the quiet paths of life, where our insignificance might easiest be shrouded—if you knew how we grew to feel the ardour that glowed in his heart and actually caught up the enthusiasm that swelled the young soldier's bosom. You have seen the world, well and long; and, I ask, is this the clay of which traitors are fashioned? Be a father to him, then, who has none; and may God let you feel all the happiness a child's affection can bestow in return.

"We are a sad heritage, Sir Count! for I now must plead for another, not less a prisoner than my poor brother. Kate is in a durance, which, if more splendid, is sad as his. The ceremony of betrothal—which, if I am rightly told, is a mere ceremonial—has consigned her to a distant land, and a life of dreary seclusion. There is no longer a reason for this. The sacrifice that she was willing to make, can now confer no benefit on him who sleeps in the churchyard. The Prince has shown towards her a degree of indifference which will well warrant this breach. There was no affection on either side, and it would be but to ratify a falsehood to pledge fidelity. You alone have influence to effect this. She will hear your counsels, and follow them with respect, and the Prince will scarcely oppose what his conduct seems to favour. This done, Sir Count, let Kate be your daughter; and oh! in all the glory of your great successes, what have you gained to compare with this? She loves you already—she has told me of the affectionate gentleness of your manner, the charm of your chivalrous sentiments, and a nobility marked by every word and every gesture. Think, then, of the unbought devotion of such a child—your own by blood and adoption—loving, tending, and ministering to you. Think of the proud beating of your heart as she leans upon your arm, and think of the happiness, as she throws around your solitary fireside all the charm of a home! How seldom is it that generosity doubles itself in its reward, but here it will be so. You will be loved, and you will be happy. With two such children, guided by your influence, and

elevated by your example, what would be your happiness, and what their fortune?"

In all these pleadings for those she loved so dearly, no allusion ever was made by her to her own condition. A few lines at the very end of the letter were all that referred to herself. They were couched in words of much humility, excusing herself for the boldness of the appeal she had made, and apologising for the hardihood with which it might be said she had urged her request.

"But you will forgive—you have already forgiven me, Sir Count," wrote she; "my unlettered style, and my trembling fingers have shown you that this task must have lain near to my heart, or I had not dared to undertake it. My life has been spent in a sphere of humble duties and humble companionship. How easily, then, may I have transgressed the limits of the deference that should separate us! I can but answer for my own heart, within which there exists towards you but the one feeling of devotion—deep and hopeful.

"If in your kindness you should ever bestow a thought upon me, you will like to know that I am well and happy. Too lowly in condition, too rude in manners, to share the fortune of those I love so dearly, I would yet delight to hear of and from them, to know that they still bear me in their affection, and think with fondness on poor lame Nelly. Even the blessing of their presence would not repay me for the wrong I should do them by my companionship, for I am a peasant girl, as much from choice as nature. Still, the sister's heart throbs strongly within the coarse bodice, and, as I sit at my work, Frank and Kate will bear me in company and cheer my solitary hours.

"My humble skill is amply sufficient to supply all my wants, were they far greater than habit has made them. I live in a land dear to me by associations of thought and feeling, surrounded by those of a condition like my own, and who love and regard me. I am not without my share of duties, too,—your kindness would not wish more for me. Farewell, then, Sir Count. Your high-hearted nature has taught you to tread a lofty path in life, and strive—and with great success—for the great rewards of merit. It will be a pleasure to you yet to know, that in this country of your adoption there are humble prizes for humble aspirants, and that one of these has fallen to the lot of

"NELLY DALTON.

"Any letter addressed 'To the care of Andreas Brennen, Juden Gasse, Inspruck,' will reach me safely. I need not say with what gratitude I should receive it."

Such were the lines which reached the old Count's hand on the very day he set out with his detachment for Vienna. Overcome by shame and sorrow at what he believed to be Frank Dalton's treason, he had demanded of the Minister of War his own act of retirement from the army, and for some months had passed a life of privacy in a little village on the Styrian frontier. The wide-spread disaffection of the Austrian provinces—the open revolt of Prague—the more than threatening aspect of Hungary, and the formidable struggle then going on in Lombardy, had called back into active life almost all the retired servants of the monarchy. To give way to private grief at such a moment seemed like an act of disloyalty, and, throwing off every mere personal consideration, the old soldier repaired to the capital, and presented himself at the Levee of the Archduke Joseph. He was received with enthusiasm. Covered with years as he was, no man enjoyed more of the confidence and respect of the soldiery, who regarded him as one tried and proved by the great wars of the Empire—a Colonel of Wagram was both a Patriarch and a Hero. It was of great consequence, too, at that precise conjuncture, to rally round the throne all that were distinguished for fealty and devotion. He was immediately appointed to the command of a division of the army, and ordered to set out for Italy.

The complicated nature of the politics of the period—the mixture of just demand and armed menace—the blending up of fair and reasonable expectations with impracticable or impossible concessions, had so disturbed the minds of men, that few were able, by their own unaided judgment, to distinguish on which side lay right and justice; nor was it easy, from the changeful councils of the Monarch, to know whether the loyalty of to-day might not be pronounced treason to-morrow. Many of the minor movements of the time—even the great struggle of the Hungarians—originated in a spontaneous burst of devotion to the Emperor—to be afterwards converted by the dark and wily policy of an unscrupulous leader into open rebellion. No wonder, then, if in such difficult and embarrassing circumstances, many strayed unconsciously from the paths of duty—some, misled by specious dreams of nationality; others, from sympathy with what they thought the weaker party; and others, again, by the force of mere companionship, or contact. In this way, few families were to be found where one or more had not joined the patriotic party, and all the ties of affection were weak in comparison with the headlong force of popular enthusiasm. The old General von Auersberg knew nothing of these great changes; no news of them had reached his retirement; so that when he rejoined the army, he was shocked to see how many had fallen away and deserted from the ancient standard of the Kaiser. Many a high name and many an ancient title were more than suspected amongst the Hungarian nobility; while in

[illegible] who most largely enjoyed the [illegible] found in the ranks of the insurgents.

It might be supposed that these things [illegible] to the imputed treason [illegible] some consolation at least [illegible] however. His mind [illegible] He was willing to concede [illegible] with a time [illegible] have no relation [illegible] and Frank did—soldiers [illegible]

[illegible] upon his name was [illegible] [illegible] services [illegible] the M[illegible] [illegible] was ready [illegible] without [illegible] it remains [illegible] my power, and [illegible]

[illegible] with which he [illegible] discovering that Frank was [illegible] escape in some [illegible]

[illegible] and the [illegible] of the Emperor [illegible] marriage came [illegible] His [illegible] a great alliance [illegible] upon poor Nelly's [illegible] ever been a dread [illegible] that his successes and [illegible] and importunate relatives [illegible] of his unaided career. And [illegible] sign was made, [illegible] was remembered in the land of his forefathers [illegible] and when at last Peter Dalton's letter [illegible] of anger—the accumulation [illegible] Nelly's epistle was a complete enigma [illegible] and yet not selfish—she was in [illegible] never asked for assistance—she [illegible] every sorrow of her brother and her sister, and

had not one thought for her own calamities. What could all this mean —was it any new phase or form of supplication, or was it really that there did exist one in the world whose poverty was above wealth, and whose simple nature was more exalted than rank or station? With all these conflicting thoughts, and all the emotions which succeeded to the various tidings he had heard, the old Count sat overwhelmed by the cares that pressed upon him; nor was it for some hours after Midchikoff's departure that he could rally his faculties to be "up and doing."

The buzz and murmur of voices in an outer room first recalled him to active thought, and he learned that several officers, recently exchanged, had come to offer their thanks for his kind intervention. The duty, which was a mere ceremony, passed over rapidly, and he was once more alone, when he heard the slow and heavy tread of a foot ascending the stairs, one by one, stopping at intervals too, as though the effort was one of great labour. Like the loud ticking of a clock to the watchful ears of sickness, there was something in the measured monotony of the sounds that grated and jarred his irritated nerves, and he called out harshly,

"Who comes there?"

No answer was returned; and, after the pause of a few seconds, the same sound recurred.

"Who's there?" cried the old man, louder; and a faint, inaudible attempt at reply followed.

And now, provoked by the interruption, he arose to see the cause, when the door slowly opened, and Frank stood before him, pale and bloodless, with one arm in a sling, and supporting himself on a stick with the other. His wasted limbs but half filled his clothes; while in his lustreless eye and quivering lip there seemed the signs of coming death.

With an instinct of kindness, the old General drew out a chair and pressed the poor boy down upon it. The youth kissed the hand as it touched him, and then heaved a heavy sigh.

"This exertion was unfit for you, my poor boy," said the Count, kindly. "They should not have permitted you to leave your bed."

"It was my fault, not theirs, General. I heard that you were about to leave the village without coming to the hospital, and I thought, as, perhaps——"—here his voice faltered, and a gulping fulness of the throat seemed almost to choke him—"that as, perhaps, we might never meet again in this world, I ought to make one effort to see you, and tell you that I am not, nor ever was, a traitor!"

As though the effort had exhausted all his strength, his arms dropped as he said the words; his head fell forward, and he would have fallen to the ground had not the old General caught him in his arms.

"You are too weak, too ill for all this, my poor fellow," said the Count, as he held the boy's hand in his own, and gazed affectionately at him.

"True, ever true," muttered the youth, with half-closed lids.

"I will hear all this when you are better, Frank—when you are strong, and able to declare it manfully and openly. I will bless you with my heart's warmest blessing, for the words that restore us both to fair fame and honour; but you must not speak more now."

The boy bent his head, in token of submission, but never spoke.

"It will be the proudest hour of my life, Frank, when you can throw off this reproach, and stand forth a thorough Dalton, unshaken in truth and honour. But, to do this, you must be calm and quiet now—not speak, nor even think of these things. You shall remain with me."

Here the boy's tears fell upon the old man's hand. For a second or two not a word was spoken. At last he went on:

"Yes; you shall not leave me from this hour. Our fortunes are the same. With you it remains to show that we are worthy soldiers of our Kaiser."

Frank pressed the old Count's hand upon his heart, as though to call its very pulses to bear witness to his fealty. This simple action seemed to have exhausted his last energy, for he now sunk back in his chair and fainted.

The excitement he had gone through appeared to have utterly prostrated him, for he now lay for hours motionless and unconscious. Except a heavy sigh at long intervals, he gave no sign of life; and the surgeons, having exhausted all their resources to stimulate him, gave but faint hope of his recovery. They who only knew the old Count as the stern soldier—bold, abrupt, and peremptory—could not conceive by what magic he had been changed into a mould of almost womanly tenderness. There was no care he did not bestow on the sick youth. The first surgeons of the Staff were sent for, and all that skill and affection could suggest were enlisted in his service. The case, however, was of gloomy presage. It was the relapse fever after a wound, aggravated by mental causes of deep influence.

The greatest sympathy was felt for the old Count's position. His comrades came or sent frequently to him; kind messages reached him from quarters wherein once lay all his pride and glory; and a young Archduke came himself to offer his new litter to convey Frank to Verona, where the Imperial head-quarters were stationed. These were the very flatteries which once Von Auersberg would have prized above all that wealth could give. These were the kind of recognitions by which he measured his own career in life, making him to feel where he stood; but now one grief had so absorbed him, that he scarcely noticed

them. He could not divest his mind, either, of the thought that the boy's fate was intended as a judgment on himself for his own cold and ungenerous treatment of him. "I forgot," would he say to himself,—"I forgot that he was not a castaway like myself. I forgot that the youth had been trained up amidst the flow of affectionate intercourse, loving and beloved, and I compared his position with my own!"

And such was in reality the very error he committed. He believed that by subjecting Frank to all the hard rubs which once had been his own fate, that he was securing the boy's future success; forgetting, the while, how widely different were their two natures, and that the affections which are moulded by habits of family association are very unlike the temperament of one unfriended and unaided, seeking his fortune with no other guidance than a bold heart and a strong will. The old Count was not the only one, nor will he be the last, to fall into this mistake; and it may be as well to take a warning from his error, and learn that for success in the remote and less trodden paths of life the warm affections that attach to home and family are sad obstacles.

It was ten days before Frank could be removed, and then he was carried in a litter, arriving in Verona on the fourth day. From his watchful cares beside the sick-bed, the old General was now summoned to take part in the eventful councils of the period. A great and momentous crisis had arrived, and the whole fate, not only of Austria, but of Europe, depended on the issue. The successes of the Italian arms had been up to this point, if not decisive, at least sufficiently important, to make the result a question of doubt. If the levies contributed by the States of the Church and Tuscany were insignificant in a warlike point of view, they were most expressive signs of popular feeling at least. Austria, besides, was assailed on every flank; with open treason in her capital; and the troops which might have conquered Lombardy were marching northward on Prague, or turning eastward towards Hungary. It then became a grave question whether, even at the cost of the whole "Milanais," a peace should not be at once concluded; and Austria merely stipulate for certain commercial advantages, and the undisturbed possession of the Venetian States. If the more dispassionate heads that rule Cabinets saw wisdom in this plan, the warmer and less calculating hearts of soldiers deemed it a base humiliation. Long accustomed to treat the Italians with a haughty contempt, they could not endure the thought of recognising them as equals, not to say superiors. There were thus two parties in the council: the one eager for a speedy termination of the war; and the other burning to erase the memory of late defeats, and win back the fair provinces of their Emperor. To such an extent had this spirit of discordance at last gone, that the Cabinet orders of Vienna were more than once overruled at head-

quarters, and the very decrees of the Government slighted by the Commander-in-Chief. It was a time of independent will and personal responsibility; and probably to this accident is owing the salvation of the Imperial House.

At last, when the sympathies of France and England with the cause of Italy became more than a mere suspicion—when troops marched southward towards the Alps, and diplomatic messages traversed Europe, counselling, in all the ambiguous courtesy of red tape, "wise and reasonable concessions to the fair demands of a people," the Cabinet of Vienna hastily despatched an Envoy to Lombardy, with orders to concert with the Generals, and treat for a Peace.

Had a squadron of the enemy dashed through the streets of Verona, they could not have created one half the dismay than did the arrival of the calèche which conveyed the Imperial Commissioner. The old Field-Marshal had just returned from a review of the troops, who, as usual when he appeared, were wild with enthusiasm, when an officer of his Staff announced the presence of the Envoy, and in a low whisper added the object of his mission. A council was speedily called, and Von Auersberg specially invited to be present and assist in its deliberations.

The discussion lasted several hours; and, however unshaken in hope, and resolute in will, the old Marshals of the Empire, they found themselves no match in argument for the wily civilian, who, displaying before them the financial embarrassments of the State, showed that war implied bankruptcy, and that even victory might mean ruin. The great questions of Imperial policy, which in their zeal they had overlooked, were strongly pressed upon them, and that public opinion of Europe, which they had only fancied a bugbear and a mockery, was represented as the formidable expression of the great family of mankind, on the conduct of one of its own members. With all this, it was no easy task to reconcile a bold soldier, at the head of a splendid army, to retire from the field, to confess himself beaten, and to acknowledge defeat, with an assured sense of victory in his heart. The evening closed in, and still they sat in debate. Some, had exchanged opposition for a dogged and cold silence; others, had modified their views to a kind of half-concession; while a few, rallied around their old Chief, with a mistaken determination to have one more dash at the enemy, should the Peace be ratified on the day after. It would seem as if the "Commissioner" had been fully prepared for every phase of this opposition: he combated every argument in turn, and addressed himself with readiness to every objection that was offered. At last, when, in a burst of mortification and anger, the old Field-Marshal arose from the table, and declared that, come what might, it should never be said that

he had lost the Provinces of his master, the other stole close beside him, and whispered a few words in his ear. The old man started—his rugged, weatherbeaten face, twitched with a short, convulsive movement, and he threw himself down into a chair, with a muttered oath on his lips.

There was now a dead silence in the chamber; every eye was turned stealthily towards the old General, by whose counsels they were wont to be guided; but he never spoke a word, and sat with his hands resting on his sword-hilt, the rattle of the scabbard against the belt, as it shook beneath his hand, being the only sound heard.

They are dreadful moments in life, when men of high and daring courage see the trust they have long reposed in bold and vigorous measures rejected, and in its stead wily and crafty counsels adopted and followed. This was such a moment; and the old warriors, tried in many a battle-field, scarcely dared to meet each other's eyes, from very shame and sorrow. It was just then that the sharp, quick trot of horses was heard from without, and the jingling sound of bells announced a post-carriage. Scarcely had it stopped, when an Aide-de-camp entered, and whispered a few words to the Field-Marshal.

"No, no," said the old man, peevishly; "we are marching on to dishonour fast enough. We want no Priestly aid to hasten our steps!"

The young Officer appeared to hesitate, and still lingered in the chamber.

"It is your friend, the Abbé, has arrived," said the General, addressing the "Commissioner," "and I have said we can dispense with his arguments. He can add little to what you have so ably spoken; and if we are to depose our arms, let it be at the bidding of our Emperor, and not at the beck of a Priest."

"But D'Esmonde must have come from the South," interposed the civilian; "he may have some tidings worth hearing."

"Let him come in, then," said the Field-Marshal, abruptly; and the Officer retired.

D'Esmonde had scarcely passed the threshold, when his quick, keen glance around the room revealed to him the nature of their gloomy counsels. A dogged look of submission sat on every face, and the wily Priest read in their fallen countenances all the bitterness of defeat.

The stern coldness of the reception that met him never abashed the Abbé in the least, and he made his compliments to the principal personages of the council with a "suave" dignity, the very opposite to their uncourteous manner. Even when he had completed the little circle of his attentions, and stood in expectation of a request to be seated, his air was calm and unembarrassed, although not a word, or even a gesture, gave the invitation. All felt that this should come from the Field-

Marshal himself, and none dared to usurp the prerogative of his rank. Too deeply lost in his own brooding thoughts to attend to anything else, the old General sat still, with his head bent down over the hilt of his sabre.

"His Holiness commissions me to greet you, Herr Feld-Marshal," said the Abbé, in a low, soft voice, "and to say that those ancient medals you once spoke of shall be speedily transmitted to your Palace at Milan."

"My Palace at Milan, Sir!" exclaimed the old man, fiercely. "When shall I see that city again? Ask that gentleman yonder, who has just arrived from Vienna, what the Cabinet counsels are; he will tell you the glorious tidings, that the army will read to-morrow in a general order!"

"I have later news than even *his!*" said the Abbé, coolly seating himself at the table, and placing a roll of papers before him. "Baron Brockhausen," said he, addressing the "Commissioner," "if I mistake not, left Vienna on the ninth, reached Inspruck the eleventh, stayed there till the evening of the thirteenth, and only reached here some hours ago. The Prime Minister, consequently, was unaware that, on the tenth, General Durando was recalled by the Pope; that, on the evening of the same day, Pepe received a similar order from the King of Naples; that the Tuscan Levies and the Polish Legion have been remanded; and that Piedmont stands alone in the contest, with a disorganised army and divided counsels! These!" said he, pointing to the letters before him—"these are copies of the documents I refer to. You will see from these that the right flank of the Piedmontese army is open and unprotected; that, except the banditti of Rome and Tuscany, there are no troops between this and Ferrara; and if the reinforcements that are now halted in the Tyrol be but hurried down, a great and decisive blow may be dealt at once."

"Beym Blitzen! you ought to have been a General of Brigade, Priest!" cried the old Field-Marshal, as he clasped his hand in both his own, and pressed it with delight. "These are the noblest words I have heard to-day. Gentlemen," said he, rising, "there is little more for a council to do. You will return at once to your several brigades. Schrann's eight battalions of Infantry, with two of Feld-Jägers, to hold themselves in readiness to march to-morrow; the Reuss Hussars to form escort to the Light Artillery on the Vicenza road; all the other Cavalry to take up position to the right, towards Peschiera."

"This means a renewal of hostilities, then?" said the Commissioner.

"It means, that I will win back the provinces of my Emperor. Let him dispose of them after as he pleases." And, so saying, he left the room, followed by the other officers.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"PLOTS, POLITICS, AND PRIESTCRAFT."

It would conduce but little to the business of our story were we to follow the changeful fortunes of the war, and trace the current of events which marked that important campaign. The struggle itself is already well known, the secret history of the contest has yet to be written. We have hinted at some of the machinations which provoked the conflict; we have shown the deep game by which Democracy was urged on to its own destruction; and, by the triumph of Absolutism, the return of the Church to her ancient rule provided and secured; we have vaguely shadowed out the dark wiles by which Freedom and Anarchy were inseparably confounded, and the cause of Liberty was made to seem the denial of all Religion. It would take us too far away from the humble track of our tale were we to dwell on this theme, or stop to adduce the various evidences of the truth of our assumption. We pass on, therefore, and leave to D'Esmonde the task of chronicling some of the results of that memorable period.

The letter, from which we purpose to make some extracts, was addressed, like his former one, to his Irish correspondent, and opened with a kind of thanksgiving over the glorious events of the preceding few weeks, wherein victory succeeded victory, and the Austrians once again became the masters of haughty Milan. We pass over the exulting description the Abbé gave of the discord and dissension in the Patriotic ranks; the reckless charges of treachery made against Carlo Alberto himself, for not undertaking the defence of a city destitute of everything; and the violent insubordination of the Lombards as the terrible hour of their retribution drew nigh. We have not space for his graphic narrative of the King's escape from Milan, protected by an Austrian escort, against the murderous assaults of fellow Patriots! These facts are all before the world, nor would it contribute to their better understanding were we to adduce the partisan zeal with which the Priest detailed them.

"The struggle, you will thus see," wrote he, "is over. The Blasphemer and the Democrat have fallen together, and it will take full a century to rally from the humiliation of such a defeat. Bethink you, my dear Michel, what that same century may make the Church, and how, if we be but vigorous and watchful, every breach in the glorious

fortress may be repaired, every outwork strengthened, every bastion newly mounted, and her whole garrison refreshed and invigorated. Without a great convulsion like this we were lost! The torpor of peace brought with it those habits of thought and reflection—the sworn enemies of all Faith! As Governments grew more popular they learned to rely less on *our* aid. The glorious sway of Belief was superseded by direct appeals to what they called common sense, and imperceptibly, but irrevocably, the world was being Protestantised. Do not fancy that my fears have exaggerated this evil. I speak of what I know thoroughly and well. Above all, do not mistake me, as though I confounded this wide-spread Heresy with what you see around you in Ireland, those backslidings which you so aptly call 'Soup Conversions.'

"By Protestantism, I mean something more dangerous than Anglicanism, which, by the way, has latterly shown itself the very reverse of an enemy. The peril I dread is that spirit of examination and inquiry, which, emboldened by the detection of some trumpery trick, goes on to question the great dogma of our religion. And here I must say, that these miracles—as they will call them—have been most ill-judged and ill-timed. Well adapted as they are to stimulate faith and warm zeal in remote and unvisited villages, they are serious errors, when they aspire to publicity and challenge detection. I have done all I could to discountenance them; but even in the Vatican, my dear Michel, there are men who fancy we are living in the 16th century! What are you to do with a deafness that cannot be aroused by the blast of a steam-engine? and which can sleep undisturbed by the thunder of railroads? Well, let us be thankful for a little breathing time; the danger from these Heretics is over, for the present. And here I would ask of you to remark how the very same result has taken place, wherever the battle was fought. The Church has been triumphant everywhere. Is this accident, my dear friend? Was it mere chance that confounded counsels, here, and dealt out ruin to Ireland, also? Why did our policy come to a successful issue, here, by a dangerous conflict; and, with you, by abstaining from one? Why, but because it was Truth—eternal, immutable Truth—for which we struggled. I must say, that if *our* game called for more active exertions, and perhaps more personal hazards, *yours*, in Ireland, was admirably devised. There never was a more complete catastrophe than that into which you betrayed your Mitchells and Meaghers; and does not the blind credulity of such men strike you as a special and divine infliction? I own I think so. They were, with all their hot blood, and all the glow of their youth, serious thinkers, and calm reasoners. They could detect the finger of *England* in every tangled scheme, and yet they never saw the shadow of *your* hand as it

shook in derision over them. Yes, Michel, the game was most skilfully played, and I anticipate largely from it. The curtain thus falls upon the first act of the drama: let us set about to prepare for its rising. I am far from saying that many errors—some, of the gravest kind—have not been committed in the conduct of this affair. More than one grand opportunity has gone by, without profit; and even my suggestion about the restoration of the States of the Church to their ancient limits within the Venetian Provinces, a demand which Rome has formally renewed every year since the treaty of Campo Formio, and which might now have been pressed with success: even this was neglected! But what could be done with a runaway Pope, and a scattered Consistory? Your letter, my dear Michel, is a perfect catechism—all questions! I must try a reply to some, at least, of its inquiries. You are anxious about the endowment of the Ursulines, and so am I; but unfortunately I can tell you little of my progress in that direction. Lady Hester Onslow would appear to have fallen into an entanglement of some sort with Lord Norwood; and although I have in my possession the means of preventing a marriage with him, or annulling it, if it should take place, yet the very exercise of this power, on my part, would as inevitably destroy all my influence over her, and be thus a mere piece of profitless malice. This, therefore, is a matter of some difficulty, increased, too, by his hasty departure from Florence—they say for England; but I have no clue to his destination, for he left this on the very day I last wrote to you—the day of my visit to the Moskova—in which you seem to be so much interested. Strangely enough, Michel, both this man and the Russian seemed to feel that they were in the toils, and broke away, rather than hazard an encounter with me. And they were right, too! For the deep game of life, there is no teaching like that of the cloister; and if we be not omnipotent, it is owing to our own weakness of purpose. Hildebrand knew this—Boniface knew it also: but we have fallen upon poor successors of these great men! What might not a Great Pope be in the age we live in! one whose ambition was commensurate with his mission, and who had energy and courage for the task before him! Oh! how I felt this, some nights ago, as I sat closeted with our present ruler; would you believe it, Michel, he has no higher guide or example than the weak and kind-hearted Pius the Seventh. To imitate *him* is the whole rule of his faith, and to resemble him, even in his misfortunes, has become an ambition. How he strung for me the commonplaces of that good man, as though they had been the distilled essences of wisdom! Alas! alas! the great heritage of the Church has not been won by Quaker Popes.

"You ask about myself. All goes well. The die is cast; and so far, at least, a great point gained. The Austrians saw the matter in its

true light, and with justice perceived that diplomacy is a war of reprisals. How I glory in the anticipation of this vengeance upon England, the encourager and abettor of all the treason against our Faith. How little do they suspect the storm that is gathering around them; how tranquilly are they walking over the ground that is to be earthquaked! The letters and diplomas are all prepared. The Bull itself is ready; tomorrow, if it were opportune, I might be proclaimed a Prince of the Church and an Archbishop of an English See! As in every great event of life the moment is everything, the question is now one of time. Guardoni—and I look upon him as the shrewdest of the Cardinals—says, 'Wait! our cause is advancing every day in England; every post brings us tidings of desertions to our army,—men distinguished in rank, station, or intellect. In our controversies we have suffered no defeats, while our moderation has gained us many well-wishers; we have a tone of general liberality to work upon, that is eminently favourable to a policy, meek, lowly, and unpretending. Therefore, I say, Wait; and do not forfeit such advantages for the glory of a pageant.' Against this it might be urged, that the hour is come to proclaim our victory; and that it would be a craven policy not to unfurl our banner above the walls we have won! I repose less trust in the force of this reasoning than in another view of the subject; and it is to the ricochet of our shot, Michel, that I look for the damage of our enemy. My calculation is this: the bold pretensions we advance will arouse the passions of the whole island; meetings, and addresses, and petitions, will abound. All the rampant insolence of outraged bigotry, all the blatant denunciations of insulted Protestantism, will burst forth like a torrent. We shall be assailed in pamphlets and papers; caricatured, hooted, burned in effigy. A wily and well-conducted opposition on our part will fan and feed this flame. Some, amongst us, will assume the moderate tone; invoke the equality that pertains to every born Briton, and ask for the mere undisturbed exercise of our Faith. Others, with greater boldness, will adventure sorties against the enemy, and thus provoke reply and discussion. To each will be assigned his suited task. All labouring for the one great object—to maintain the national fever at a white heat—to suffer no interval of calm reflection to come—and to force upon the Parliament, by the pressure of outward opinion, some severe, or, at least, some galling act of legislation. This once accomplished, our game is won, and the great schism we have so long worked for, effected! It will then be the Government on one side and the Church on the other. Could you wish for anything better? For myself, I care little how the campaign be then conducted; the victory must be our own. I have told you again and again there is no such policy against England as that of hampering the course of her justice. It

was O'Connell's secret; he had no other; and he never failed till he attempted something higher. First, provoke a rash legislation, and then, wait for the discomfiture that will follow it! With all the boasted working of the great Constitution, what a mere trifle disturbs and disjoints it. Aye, Michel, a rusty nail in the cylinder will spoil the play of the piston although the engine be rated at a thousand horse power. Such a conflict with Protestantism, is exactly like the effect of a highly-disciplined army taking the field against a mob. With *us*, all is preconcerted, prearranged, and planned; with *them*, everything is impulsive, rash, and ill-advised. This glorious prerogative of private judgment becomes a capital snare, when measures should be combined and united. Fancy—I ask of you—fancy all the splendid errors of their hot enthusiasm—think of the blunders they will commit on platform or pulpit—reflect upon the folly and absurdity that will fill the columns of the public journals, and all the bigoted balderdash the press will groan under. What coarse irony, what Billingsgate shall we hear of our Holy Church—her Saints, her Miracles, and her Dogmas,—what foul invectives against her pious women and their lives of sanctity! And then think of the glorious harvest that will follow, as we reply to insult by calm reasonings, to bigotry, by words of charity and enlightenment, appealing to the nation at large for their judgment on which side Truth should lie—with intolerance, or with Christian meekness and submission?

"Prepare, then, I say, for the coming day; the great campaign is about to open, and neither you nor I, Michel, will live to see the end of the battle. On this side the Alps, all has happened as we wished. Italian Liberalism is crushed and defeated. The Piedmontese are driven back within their frontier, their army beaten, and their finances all but exhausted, and Austria is again at the head of Northern Italy. Rome will now be grander and more glorious than ever. No more truckling to Liberalism—no more faith in the false prophets of Freedom. Our gorgeous 'Despotism' will arise reinvigorated by its trials, and the Church will proclaim herself the Queen of Europe!

"It is an inestimable advantage to have convinced these meek and good men here that there is but one road to victory, and that all alliance with what are called Politicians is but a snare and a delusion.

"The Pope sees this at last, but nothing short of wounded pride could have taught him the lesson.

"Now to your last query, my dear Michel, and I feel all gratitude for the warm interest with which you make it. What is to be done, I know not. I am utterly ignorant of my parentage—even of my birthplace. In the admission-book of Salamanca, I stand thus:—'Samuel Eustace, native of Ireland, aged thirteen years and seven months; stipendiary of the second class.' There lies my whole history. A certain

Mr. Godfrey had paid all the expenses of my journey from Louvain, and, up to the period of his death, continued to maintain me. From Louvain I can learn nothing. I was a 'Laic' they believed—perhaps No. 134, or 137—they do not know which; and these are but sorry facts from which to derive the baptismal registry of a future Cardinal. And yet something must be done, and speedily too. On the question of birth, the Sacred College is peremptory. You will say that there ought to be no difficulty in devising a genealogy, where there are no adverse claims to conflict; and if I could go over to Ireland, perhaps the matter might be easy enough. At this moment, however, my presence here, is all essential, while I am not without a hope that accident may afford me a clue to what I seek. A few days ago, I was sent for from Malgherra to attend the dying bed of a young officer, whose illness had so completely disordered his brain, that he forgot every word of the foreign language he was accustomed to speak, and could only understand or reply in his native English. Although I had other and more pressing cases to attend to, the order coming from an Archduke made obedience imperative, and so I hastened over to Verona, where the sick youth lay. Conceive my surprise, Michel, to discover that he was the same Dalton—the boy whom I have so often adverted to, as eternally crossing my path in life—the relative of that Godfrey who was my early patron. I have already confessed to you, Michel, that I felt towards this youth in a way for which my calmest reason could render no account. Gamblers have often told me of certain antipathies they have experienced, and that the mere presence of an individual—one totally unknown to them, perhaps—has been so ominous of ill-luck, that they dare not risk a bet while he remained in the room. I know you will say, that men who pass their lives in the alternation of hope and fear, become the slaves of every shadow that crosses the imagination, and that they are sorry pilots to trust to. So they are, Michel; they are meanly minded, they are sordid, and they are low; their thoughts never soar above the card or the hazard-table; they are dead to all emotions of family and affection; the very events that are convulsing the world are less audible to their ears than the ring of the dice-box; and yet, with all this, would you believe it? they are deep in the mysteries of portents. Their intense study of what we call Chance, has taught them to combine, and arrange, and discipline every atom and accident that can influence an event. They have their days of good and evil fortune, and they have their agencies that sway them to this side or to that. Chemistry shows us that substances that resemble metals are decomposed by the influence of light alone—do not then despise the working of that gleam that darts from a human eye and penetrates within the very recesses of your brain.

"Be the theory true or false, the phenomena exercise a deep influence

over me, and I have never ceased to regard this boy as one inextricably interwoven with myself and my own fortunes; I felt a degree of dread at his contact, which all my conscious superiority of mind and intellect could not allay. In vain have I endeavoured to reason myself out of these delusions, but in the realm of imagination reason is inoperative; as well might a painter try to commit to his palette the fleeting colours of the rainbow. Shall I own to you, that in moments of illness or depression, this terror magnified itself to giant proportions, and a thousand wild and incongruous fancies would fill my mind. I bethought me of involving him in such difficulty that he would no longer be at large; as a prisoner or an exile, I should never see him more. Every snare I tried was a failure; the temptations that were most adapted to his nature he resisted; the wiles I threw around him he escaped from. Was there not a fate in all this? Assuredly there was and is, Michel. I cannot tell you the relief of mind I should feel if this boy had shared the fate of your patriots, and that the great sea was to roll between him and Europe for ever. Twenty times a day I think of Dirk Hatteraick's expression with respect to Brown: 'That boy has been a rock a-head of me all through life;' and be assured that the characters of fiction are often powerful teachers.

"And now to my narrative. The same note which requested my visit at Verona begged of me, if I could possibly accomplish it, to provide some English person, who should sit up with the sick youth and nurse him. I was not sorry to receive this commission; I wished to learn more about this boy than the confessional at such a time could teach; and could I only find a suitable agent, this would not be difficult. Chance favoured me strangely enough. Amongst the prisoners taken at Ancona I found an Irish fellow, who, it appears, had taken service in the Piedmontese navy. He had been some years in America and the West Indies, and from the scattered remarks that he let fall, I perceived that he was a man of shrewd, and not over-scrupulous, nature. He comprehended me in an instant; and, although I was most guarded in giving my instructions, the fellow read my intentions at once. This shrewdness might, in other circumstances, have its inconveniences, but here it gave me no alarm. I was the means of his liberation, and, were he troublesome, I could consign him to the prison again—to the galleys, if needed. In company with this respectable ally, I set out for the head-quarters. On my arrival, I waited on the Count von Auersberg, in whose house the sick boy lay. This old man, who is Irish by birth, is more Austrian in nature than the members of the House of Hapsburg. I found him fully convinced that the white-coated legions had reconquered Lombardy by their own unaided valour, and I left him in the same pleasant delusion. It

appeared that a certain Count von Walstein was enabled to clear young Dalton's character from all taint of treason, by exhibiting, in his own correspondence, some letters and documents that related to the events detailed in Frank's writing, and of which he could have had no possible knowledge. This avowal may be a serious thing for Walstein, but rescues the young Dalton at once, and proves that he was merely the writer of Ravitsky's sentiments; so that here, again, Michel, he escapes. Is not this more than strange?

"It was not without anxiety that I passed the threshold of the sick-chamber; but happily it was darkened, and I soon saw that the sick youth could never recognise me, were his senses even unclouded. He lay motionless, and I thought insensible; but after I spoke to him he rallied a little, and asked after his father and his sisters. He had not yet heard that his father was dead; and it was affecting to hear the attempt he made to vindicate his honour, and show that he had never been disloyal. By degrees I brought him to talk of himself. He saw that he was dying, and had no fears of death; but there seemed as if his conscience was burdened by some heavy weight, less like guilt than the clue to some strange and dark affair. The revelation—if it deserved the name, for it was made in broken sentences—now, uttered with rapid vehemence, now, scarcely audible—was of the vaguest kind. You may imagine, however, the interest I felt in the narrative as the name Godfrey passed his lips. You know my anxiety to trace some tie of family to these Godfreys. They were gentry of ancient blood and good name, and would amply satisfy the demands of the Sacred College; so that when the boy spoke of Godfrey, I listened with intense curiosity; but, shall I own it, all my practised skill, all my science of the sick-bed, was unable to tell me what were the utterings of an unclouded intellect, and what the wild fitful fancies of fever. I know, for I have repeatedly heard it from his sister's lips, that this youth has never been in Ireland, and yet he spoke of the peculiar scenery of a certain spot, just as if he had traversed it yesterday. Mind, that I am carefully distinguishing between what might be the impression left by often hearing of a scene from others, and that which results from personal observation. His was altogether of the latter kind. As, for instance, when describing a garden, he mentioned how the wind wafted the branches of a weeping ash across a window, so as to confuse the scene that went on within; and then he shuddered terribly, and, with a low sigh, exclaimed, 'The light went out *after* that.' These are not ravings, Michel. This boy knows something of that dark mystery I have more than once alluded to in my letters. Could it be that his own father was in some way im-

plicated in the affair? Bear in mind how he came to live abroad, and never returned to Ireland. From all I can learn, the old Dalton was a bold and reckless character, that would scarcely have stopped at anything. Assuredly, the son's conscience is heavily burdened! Now, there is an easy way to test the truth or fallacy of all this; and herein you must aid me, Michel. I have carefully noted every word the boy spoke; I have treasured every syllable that fell from him. If his description of the scene be correct, the mystery may be unravelled. This you can speedily ascertain by visiting the spot. It is not more than twenty miles from you, and about three or four, I believe, from the little village of Inistioge; it is called Corrig O'Neal—a place of some importance once, but now, as I hear, a ruin. Go thither, Michel, and tell me correctly all these several points. First, does the character of the river scenery suddenly change at this spot, and, from an aspect of rich and leafy beauty, exhibit only dark and barren mountains, without a tree or a shrub? Is the old manor-house itself only a short distance from the stream, and backed by these same gloomy mountains? The house itself, if unaltered, should be high-peaked in roof, with tall, narrow windows, and a long terrace in front; an imitation, in fact, of an old French Château. These, as you will see, are such facts as might have been heard from another; but, now, I come to some less likely to have been so learned.

"From this boy's wanderings, I collect that there is a woodland-path through these grounds, skirting the river in some places, and carried along the mountain-side by a track escarped in the rock itself. If this ever existed, its traces will still be visible. I am most curious to know this fact. I can see the profound impression it has made on the youth's mind, by the various ways in which he recurs to it, and the deep emotion it always evokes. At times, indeed, his revelations grow into something like actual descriptions of an event he had witnessed; as, for instance, last night he started from his sleep, his brow all covered with perspiration, and his eyes glaring wildly: 'Hush!' he cried; 'hush! He is crossing the garden, now, there he is at the door, lie still—lie still.' I tried to induce him to talk on, but he shuddered timidly, and merely said, 'It's all over, he has strewn leaves over the spot, let us go away.' You will perhaps say that I attach undue importance to what may be the mere outpourings of a fevered intellect, but there is an intensity in the feeling which accompanies them; and, moreover, there is a persistance in the way he always comes back to them, that are not like the transient terrors that haunt distracted minds. No, Michel, there is a mystery, and a dreadful one, connected with this vision. Remember! that the secret of Godfrey's death has never been cleared up; the breach

which separated him from these Daltons was then at its widest. Dalton's character you are familiar with; and, although abroad at that time, who can say what agencies may not have worked for him. Give your serious consideration to these facts, and tell me what you think. You know me too well, and too long, to suppose that I am actuated by motives of mere curiosity, or simply the desire to trace the history of a crime. I own to you, that with all my horror of blood, I scarcely grieve as I witness the fruitless attempts of English justice to search out the story of a murder. I feel a sort of satisfaction at the combat between Saxon dulness and Celtic craft—between the brute force of the conqueror, and the subtle intelligence of the conquered—that tells me of a time to come, when these relations shall be reversed. Acquit me, therefore, of any undue zeal for the observance of laws that only remind me of our slavery. However clear and limpid the stream may look, I never forget that its source was in foulness! I am impelled here by a force, that my reason cannot account for. My boyhood was, in some manner, bound up with this Godfrey's fate. I was fatherless when he died! could he have been my father? This thought continually recurs to me! Such a discovery would be of great value to me just now; the question of legitimacy would be easily got over, as I seek for none of the benefits of succession. I only want what will satisfy the Sacred College. My dear Michel, I commit all this to your care and industry; give me your aid and your advice. Should it happen that Dalton was involved in the affair, the secret might have its value. This old Field-Marshal's pride of name and family could be turned to good account.

"I must tell you, that since I have overheard this boy's ravings, I have studiously avoided introducing my Irish *protégé* into the sick room. My friend, Paul Meekins, might be a most inconvenient confidant, and so I shall keep him under my own eye, till some opportunity occurs to dispose of him. He tells me that his present tastes are all ecclesiastical. Do you want a Sacristan? if so, he would be your man. There is no such trusty subordinate, as the fellow with what the French call 'a dark antecedent;' and this I suspect to be his case.

"I have well wearied you, my dear friend, and yet have I not told you half of what I feel on this strange matter. I am little given to tremble at shadows, and still there are terrors over me that I cannot shake off. Write to me, then, at once; tell me all that you see—all that you can hear. Observe well the localities: it will be curious if the boy be correct. Mark particularly if there be a spot of rising ground from which the garden is visible, and the windows that look into it, and see if there be a door out of the garden, at this point. I could almost map out the scene from his description.

" have done, and now, I scarcely know whether I should feel more relief of heart to know that all this youth has said were fever wanderings, or words of solemn meaning. It is strange how tranquilly I can move through the great events of life, and yet how much a thing like this can shake my nerve; but I suppose it is ever so, and that we are great or little as the occasion makes us.

"I have just heard that Lady Hester Onslow has gone over to Ireland. She will probably be at Corrig O'Neal. If so, you can present yourself to her as my old and intimate friend, and this will afford you an opportunity of examining the scene at leisure. I enclose you a few lines to serve as introduction. Adieu, my dear Friend.

"You have often sighed over the obscurity of your position, and the unambitious life of a Parish Priest. Believe me, and from my heart I say it, I would willingly exchange all the rewards I have won, all that I could ever hope to win, for one week—one short week of such calm quiet as breathes under the thatched roof of your little cottage.

"I leave this for Vienna to-morrow, to thank the Minister; and with good reason, too, since without his assistance the Pope would have shrunk from the bold policy. Thence, I go to Rome; but within a fortnight I shall be back in Florence, where I hope to hear from you. If all goes well, we shall meet soon.—Yours, in much affection,

"MATTHEW D'ESMONDE."

As the Abbé finished this letter, he turned to look at a short note, which, having opened and scanned over, he had thrown on the table beside him. It was from Albert Jekyl, who wrote to inform him that Lord Norwood had just arrived in Florence from Ireland, where he had left Lady Hester. That so far as he, Jekyl, could make out, the Viscount had made an offer of marriage, and been accepted.

"It will be for you, my dear Abbé," added he, "to ascertain this fact positively, as, independently of the long journey at this inclement season, it would be a very serious injury to me were it known that I advanced pretensions that were not responded to. He who has never failed must not risk a defeat. Pray lose no time in investigating this affair, for Florence is filling fast, and my future plans will depend on your reply."

The Priest bestowed little attention on the small gossipry that filled up the page. His eye, however, caught the name of Midchikoff, and he read:

"The Prince returned last Tuesday to the Moskova, but no one has seen him, nor has any one been admitted within the gates. Of course there are a hundred rumours as to the why and the wherefore. Some, alleging that he has received orders of 'reclusion,' as they call it, from home, the Emperor not being quite satisfied with

his political campaign; some, that he has taken up a grudge against the Court here, and shows his spleen in this fashion. But what shallow reason would this be for a hermit life? and what legitimate ground of complaint have not we, who, so to say, possess a vested interest in his truffles, and ortolans, and dry Champagne? I assure you that such conduct rouses all the democracy of my nature, and I write these lines with a red silk cap on my head. After all, the real good he effected was a kind of reflected light. He crushed little people, and ground down all their puny efforts at balls, dinners, and déjeûners. He shamed into modest insignificance such a world of snobbery, and threw an air of ridicule over 'small early party-ism,' and 'family-dinners.' What a world of dyspepsia has he thus averted—what heart-burns and heart-burnings! Oh, little people! little people! ye are a very dreadful generation, for ye muddy the waters of society, so that no man can drink thereof.

"Politically we are calm and reactionary; and, whether it be thrashing has done it, I know not; but some of the Tuscans are 'Black and Yellow' already. Not that the dear Austrians promise to make Florence better or pleasanter. They mix badly with our population. It is as if you threw a spoonful of 'Sauer-kraut' into your 'Potage à la Reine!' Besides, the Italians are like the Chinese—unchanged and unchangeable—and they detest the advent of all strangers who would interfere with their own little, soft, sleepy, and enervating code of wickedness.

"Pray send me three lines, just to say—Is it to be, or not to be? Rose, the tailor, is persecuting me about a Mocha-brown, for a wedding garment, which certainly would harmonise well with the prevailing tints of my hair and eyebrows, but I am too prudent a Diplomatist, to incur 'extraordinaires,' till I be sure of 'my mission.' Therefore write at once, for such is my confidence in your skill and ability, that I only wait your mandate to launch into kid-gloves and lacquered leather, quite regardless of expense.

"Yours, most devotedly,

"ALBERT JEKYL.

"I open this to say, that Morlache was seen going to the Moskova last night, with two caskets of jewels. Will this fact throw any light on the mysterious seclusion?"

These last two lines D'Esmonde read over several times, and then, crushing the note in his hand, he threw it into the fire. Within an hour after, he was on his way to Florence.

Alfred making choice of a wedding garment

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SECRET, AND A SNARE.

As we draw near to the end of our voyage, we feel all the difficulty of collecting the scattered vessels of our convoy, and, while signalising the "clippers" to shorten sail, we are calling on the heavy sailors to crowd "all their canvas."

The main interest of our story would keep us beside Frank Dalton, whose fate seemed daily to vacillate—now, threatening gloomily—now, rallying into all the brightness of hope. By slow and cautious journeys the old Count proceeded to remove him to Vienna, where he expected soon to be joined by Kate. Leaving them, then, to pursue their road by steps far too slow for our impatience, we hasten along with D'Esmonde, as, with all the speed he could accomplish, he made for Florence.

Occasionally he tried to amuse himself and divert his thoughts by conversing with Meekins, who accompanied him; but, although the man's shrewdness was above the common, and his knowledge of the world very considerable, D'Esmonde quickly saw that a thick cloak of reserve covered the real man on all occasions, and that his true nature lay many a fathom deep below that smooth surface. The devout respect which he felt for the Abbé might, perhaps, have increased this reserve—for Meekins was an Irish peasant, and never forgot the deference due to a Priest.

Accustomed to read men at sight, D'Esmonde would give himself no trouble in deciphering a page which promised little to reward the labour; and so, after a while, he left his companion to occupy the "box," while he himself followed his own thoughts alone and undisturbed. Now and then he would be aroused from his deep reveries by remarking the reverential piety of the peasants as they passed some holy shrine or some consecrated altar. Then, indeed, Meekins displayed a fervour so unlike the careless indifference of the native, that D'Esmonde was led to reflect upon the difference of their natures, and speculate on how far this devotion of character was innate in the Irishman, or merely the result of circumstances.

There was an expression of eager, almost painful meaning, too, in the man's face as he muttered his prayers, that struck the keen eyes of the Abbé; and he could not avoid saying to himself, "That fellow has a load upon his heart. Fear, and not Hope, is the mainspring of his devotions."

[illegible] the case as a philo- [illegible] I may give his facul- [illegible] numerous for more [illegible]

[illegible] the mountain over [illegible] the hill above the "Mo- [illegible] the spot. The Villa, [illegible] illuminated; the lights gleamed [illegible] the sound of rich [illegible]

"[illegible] "These are signs of [illegible] however, he found [illegible] Even the usual [illegible] and unoccupied. [illegible] his emotion was [illegible] the gate, his strong [illegible] muttered he to himself in [illegible] I must not have given thee this, [illegible] my heart!" He leaned his face [illegible] poison," cried he, in a [illegible] passion, when [illegible] years and years of time! To think [illegible] successful ambi- [illegible] highest—all that I possess of power [illegible] the grief for a half-forgotten [illegible] How poor a thing the heart is, when we fancy its [illegible] highest."

[illegible] he slowly returned to the carriage [illegible] and entering the city, he drove for the house of [illegible]. The Jew was not at home, but was to return [illegible] at which hour he had ordered supper for a guest and himself. [illegible] lay down on a sofa, and fell asleep. Wearied as he was, his watchfulness soon detected the approach of footsteps; and, as he listened, he heard the voice of a stranger in colloquy with the servant. The door opened at the same time, and Lord Norwood entered. [illegible] only waited for the servant to retire, when he sprang forward to salute him.

"[illegible] I thought you were at the camp, or at Vienna, or somewhere to the north'ard," said the Viscount, coolly.

"I was so, my Lord: and there, I should have remained, if a pressing duty had not recalled me to Florence."

"You have always so many irons in the fire, Abbé, that it requires some skill to keep them all hot."

"You are right, my Lord; some skill and some practice, too."

"And do you never burn your fingers?" said the other, sarcastically.

"Very rarely, my Lord; for when I meddle with fire, I generally make use of my friends' hands."

"By Jove, it's not a bad plan!" cried the Viscount, laughing; for, as the Priest well knew, he had a most lively appreciation for every species of knavery, and entertained real respect for all who practised it. "You *are* a very downy cove, Master D'Esmonde," said he, gazing at him; "and you'd have made a very shining figure on the Turf, had your Fortune thrown you in that direction."

"Perhaps so, my Lord," said the Abbé, carelessly. "My own notion is, that fair natural gifts are equal to any exigencies ever demanded of us; and that the man of average talent, if he have only energy and a strong will, has no superior to dread."

"That may do well enough," said Norwood, rising and pacing the room,—"that may do well enough, in the common occurrences of life, but it won't do on the Turf, Abbé. The fellows are too artful for you there. There are too many dodges, and tricks, and windings. No, no, believe me; nothing has a chance in racing matters without perfect and safe 'information;' you know what that means."

"It is precisely the same thing in the world at large," said D'Esmonde. "The very cleverest men rush into embarrassments and involve themselves in difficulties for which there is no issue, simply for want of what you call 'information.' Even yourself, my Lord," said he, dropping his voice to a low and distinct whisper—"even yourself may discover that you owe safety to a Popish Priest."

"How do you mean? What do you allude to?" cried Norwood, eagerly.

"Sit down here, my Lord. Give me a patient hearing for a few minutes. We have fortunately a moment of unbroken confidence now; let us profit by it."

Norwood seated himself beside the Priest, without speaking, and, folding his arms, prepared to hear him calmly.

"My Lord Norwood," said the Abbé, "I will not torture you by any prolixity, nor will I waste your time by any appeal to your forgiveness. If my own conduct in the affair I am about to relate should not meet your approval, it is enough that I have satisfied my own conscience."

"Go on—go on," said Norwood, in a tone of almost sarcasm; "I see that you have injured me, let me hear how and where."

"You shall hear both, my Lord, and briefly, too. I have only to invoke your memory, and the story is told. You remember being at Salamanca, in the year 18—? You remember, too, a certain Ballerina of the Grand Opera? You had seen her first at Seville——"

"Yes—yes," broke in Norwood, reddening deeply; "I know what you mean,—the girl was my mistress."

"Stay, my Lord. Do not dishonour yourself; she was your Wife—legally and formally married to you—the registry of the act is in existence, and the Priest who performed the ceremony now stands before you."

"By Heaven!" said Norwood, springing to his feet, "you are a bold fellow to dare this game with *me!* and to try it in such a place as this!"

"Aye, my Lord, the river rolls dark and silently beside us," said D'Esmonde, calmly, "and the Arno has covered up many a more dreadful deed; but I have no fears—not one. I am unarmed, in strength I am certainly not your equal, and yet, I repeat it, my heart assures me that I stand in no peril."

For an instant, Norwood seemed to hesitate how to act. The great veins of his face and forehead became swollen and knotted, and he breathed with the rushing sound of severe, restrained passion. At last, as if to guard himself against any sudden impulse of anger, he walked round and seated himself at the opposite side of the table.

D'Esmonde resumed as calmly as before—"Yes, my Lord, Lola took care that everything should be regular and in form; and the names of Gerald Acton and Lola de Seviglia are inscribed on the records of the Collegiate Chapel. Two of the witnesses are still living; one of them, then a poor boy carrying messages for the convent, is now Captain in the Pope's Guard."

"Come—come, enough of this," cried D'Esmonde, impatiently. "I see the drift of it all. When the Church interposes her kind offices, the question resolves itself always into money. How much—how much?"

"You mistake greatly, my Lord; but your error does not offend me. I know too well how men of *your* form of belief regard men of *mine!* I am not here either to combat a prejudice, or assert a right. I tell you, therefore, calmly and dispassionately, that no demand is made upon you. There is no siege laid against you, in person or in purse."

"Then how does the matter concern me, if this girl be alive?—and even of that, I have my doubts——"

"You need have none," said D'Esmonde, interruptingly. "Lady Norwood——"

"Stop! By Heaven! if you dare to give her that name, I'll not answer for myself."

"I call her as she styles herself—as she is called by all around her. Yes, my Lord, the shame is as open as gossip and malevolence can make it. The Foreigner is but too glad when he can involve an English name and title in a reproach that we are prone to cast upon him. A Peeress is a high mark for scandal! Who stops to ask how, or when, or where she became this? Who interposes a charitable word of explanation or of incredulity? From what you know of life, on what side, think you, will lie the ingenuity and craft? Whether will the evidence preponderate to prove her your wife or to exonerate *you?* At all events, how will the matter read in England? I speak not of your ruined hopes of an alliance befitting your high station. *This* is beyond repairing! But are you ready to meet the shame and ignominy of the story? Nothing is too base, nothing too infamous, for an imputation. Will any one, I ask of you—will any one assert that you are ignorant of all this? Would any one believe who heard it? Will not the tale be rather circulated with all its notes and comments? Will not men fill up every blank by the devices of their own bad ingenuity? Will not some assert that you are a partner in your own infamy, and that your fingers have touched the price of your shame?"

"Stop!" cried Norwood. "Another word—one syllable more like this—and, by the Heaven above us, your lips will never move again!"

"It would be a sorry recompense for my devotion to you, my Lord," said the Abbé, with a profound sigh.

"Devotion!" repeated Norwood, in a voice of insulting sarcasm, "as if I were to be tricked by this! Keep these artifices for some trembling devotee—some bedridden or palsied worshipper of saintly relics and holy legerdemain; I'm not the stuff for such deceptions!"

"And yet, my Lord, what possible benefit can accrue to myself from this ungracious task? With all your ingenuity, what personal gain can result to *me?*"

"What care I for your motives, Sir," responded Norwood, fiercely. "I only know that you had never incurred so critical a hazard without an object. You either seek to exert a menace over *me*, or to be revenged on *her*."

"Alas, my Lord, I see how little hope I should have of vindicating myself before you. Your estimate of the Papist suggests nothing above craft and dishonesty. You will not believe that human affections, love of country, and all the other associations of a home, are strong in hearts that beat beneath the serge frock of the Priest. Still less do you know the great working principle of our Faith—the law which binds us, for every unjust act we have done in life, to make an expiation, in this

[illegible] burdened with this [illegible] with your request, I should [illegible] Had I been firm, you had been [illegible] I only worked your ruin; [illegible] he at once took [illegible] and my rank as a Deacon took [illegible] D'Esmonde seemed not to [illegible] with which Norwood heard these [illegible] some requital for this [illegible] your anger may inflict upon me."

"[illegible]" [illegible] Norwood, [illegible], and as if in[illegible] "Where is she?"

"[illegible]" [illegible]

"[illegible] Not in this house?"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]—calling herself by my name?"

"[illegible] wealth, and as openly as [illegible]"

"[illegible]—[illegible] you say?" cried Norwood, in a burst of [illegible]

"[illegible] The [illegible] exults in the insult that this [illegible] of Europe. This is the vengeance he [illegible] in London, and all that reserve [illegible] English society."

"[illegible]—who sent for her?—who devised this scheme? [illegible] by Heaven, if I see you equivocate, you'll [illegible]"

"[illegible] and fairly," said the Abbé, with [illegible] and now in a few words he traced Nina's life, from the [illegible] under Lady Hester's roof, to the moment of her [illegible] Florence. He omitted nothing; neither her intimacy with [illegible] George Onslow. Even to the incident of the [illegible] the night of the flight, he told all.

Norwood listened with the stern collectedness of one who had nerved himself for a great effort. Although the blood spurted from his compressed lips, and the nails of his fingers were buried in his hands, he uttered never a word. At last, when D'Esmonde paused, he said:

"And you knew all this?"

"Nothing whatever of it. I never chanced to see her at Florence, nor had I the slightest suspicion of her presence there."

"Lady Hester knew it? Miss Dalton knew it?"

"I suspect not, at that time."

"They know it *now*, then?"

"Who does not? Is not Florence ringing with the story? When has scandal fallen upon such material for its malevolence? Such *dramatis personæ* as a Prince, an English Peer, and his Peeress, are not of every day's good fortune!"

"Be cautious how you harp on this theme, Priest. In your good zeal to hammer the metal soft, you may chance to crush your own finger."

"I must be frank with you, my Lord, whatever the hazard. He would be a sorry surgeon who, after giving his patient all the agony of the knife, stopped short, and left the malady unextirpated."

"Come, now, D'Esmonde," said Norwood, as with a strong grasp he drew the other down on the sofa beside him, "*you* have your debt to acquit in this matter as well as myself. I do not seek to know how, or why, or upon whom. Your priestly craft need not be called into exercise—I want nothing of your secrets—I only ask your counsel. That much in our common cause you cannot refuse me. What shall I do in this affair? No cant—no hypocritical affectation of Christian forgiveness—none of that hackneyed advice that you dole out to your devotees; speak freely, and like a man of the world. What is to be done here?"

"If the marriage admitted of dispute or denial, I should say, disavow it," said the Priest. "It is too late for this."

"Go on. What next?"

"Then comes the difficulty. To assert your own honour, you must begin by a recognition of her, as your Wife. This looks rash, but I see no other course. You cannot call Midchikoff to a reckoning on any other grounds. Then comes the question, is such a woman worth fighting for? or must the only consideration be the fact that she bears your name, and that she is the Viscountess Norwood in every society she can enter? How is this to be borne? The stricter code of England rejects such claimants altogether from its circle, but, on the Continent, they are everywhere. Will it be possible for you to live under this open shame?"

"Your advice is, then—shoot him!" said Norwood; and he bent his eyes fixedly on the Priest, as he spoke. "It is my own notion, also. If the choice were open to me, D'Esmonde, I'd rather have exacted the payment of this debt from Onslow; I hated the fellow from my very heart. Not that I owe this Russian any good-will. We have more than once been on the verge of a quarrel. It was not my fault if it went no further. They say, too, that he has no taste for these things. If so, one must stimulate his appetite, that's all!—eh, D'Esmonde? *Your* countrymen seldom need such provocations?"

"We have our faults, my Lord; but this is scarcely amongst their number."

"You're right, D'Esmonde," said the other, pursuing his former line of thought. "It's no petty penalty to exact from a fellow with fifty thousand a year! I almost fancy I should have been a coward myself at such a price!"

"You'll have some difficulty in obtaining access to him, my Lord," remarked the Abbé. "He lives in strict privacy, and refuses admission to every one."

"But a letter will reach him?"

"It may, or it may not; besides, it may come to hand, and yet never be acknowledged."

"What is to be done, then?"

"I'll think over it, before we separate. I'll try and suggest something. But here comes Morlache; and now be cautious. Not a word to show that you are ill at ease." The warning was scarcely spoken, when the Jew entered.

Morlache knew D'Esmonde too well to be surprised at seeing him anywhere, or at any moment. He saluted him, therefore, as though they had met the very day before, and the party sat down to supper, in all the seeming ease of unburdened minds.

They chatted over the politics of Italy, and the change that had come over Florence since the last time they had sat together in that chamber.

"It was a noisy scene, that night," said Morlache; "but the streets are quiet enough now."

"Quiet as a corpse," said Norwood, sternly. "You had no other nostrum for tranquillity, but to extinguish life."

"What you regard as death, my Lord," said the Abbé, "is only a trance. Italy will rise grander and more powerful than ever. One element alone has survived through all the convulsive throes, and all the changing fortunes of this land; the Papacy. The terrible wars of rival cities and states—the more bloody contests of ambitious houses—leave not a trace behind them; but Rome holds on her proud way, and, like the great river of the Poet—'Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.'"

"To which I beg, in a less classical quotation, to rejoin—'Confound your politics,'" cried Norwood, laughing. "Come, Morlache, let us turn to a humbler theme. Who have you got here—who are coming for the winter?"

"Say, rather, my Lord, who are going away; for there is a general flight from Florence. All what hotel folk call good families, are hastening off to Rome and Naples."

"What's the meaning of this, then?"

"It is not very difficult, perhaps, to explain," said the Jew; "luxuries are only the creations of mere circumstance. The rarity of one land may be the very satiety of another; and the iced-punch that tastes so exquisite at Calcutta, would be but sorry tipple at Coppermine River. Hence you will see, my Lord, that the English who come here for wickedness find the place too bad for them. There is no zest to their vice—they shock nobody—they outrage nothing—in fact, they are only as bad as their neighbours."

"I suppose it's neither better nor worse than I remember it, these dozen years and more?" said Norwood.

"Probably not, my Lord, in fact; but, in outward appearance, it has assuredly degenerated; people behave badly everywhere, but this is the only city in Europe where it is deemed right to do so."

"Since when have you taken up the trade of moralist, Master Morlache?" said Norwood, with a sneer.

"*I'll* answer that question," broke in D'Esmonde. "Since the exchange on England has fallen to forty-three and a half. Morlache sees his clients diminish, and is consequently as angry with Vice as he had been with its opposite, if the same result had come to pass."

"I own," said the Jew, with a sneer, "the present order of things is far more profitable to the confessional than to the 'comptoir.'"

"That's the truth, I've no doubt of it," broke in Norwood, laughing. 'A low tariff has given a great impulse to the trade of wickedness."

"Taking your own illustration, my Lord, we are 'Protectionists,'" said D'Esmonde; "whereas you, Protestants, are the 'Free-traders' in vice."

"A plague on both your houses, say I," cried Norwood, yawning. "So, then, Morlache, neither you nor I would find this a desirable residence?"

"I fear it will not repay either of us, my Lord," said the Jew, with a sly look.

"The world is growing wonderfully wide awake," said Norwood. "When I entered life, any fellow with a neat hand at billiards, a fair knowledge of écarté or short whist, good whiskers, and a well-cut waistcoat, might have eked out a very pretty existence without any risk, and very little exertion. But see what the march of intelligence has done! There's not an Eton boy—not an unfledged 'Sub' in a marching regiment—not an unpaid Attaché at a small Court—couldn't compete with

you, now, in any of these high acquirements. I do not fret myself usually about what is to come after *my* time, but I really wonder how the next generation will get on at all."

"Civilisation moves like the pendulum, my Lord," said D'Esmonde; "the next swing will be retrograde. And, by the way, that reminds me of Russia, and Russia of Prince Midchikoff. Is it true that he is recalled, Morlache?"

"Not that I know. That report is always circulated when there are no dinners at the Villa. Just as Marshal Soult is said to have won or lost the battle of Toulouse, according to the momentary estimation he is held in."

"You'll hear, for certain, my Lord," said D'Esmonde, addressing Norwood; "you are going up there, to-night?"

Norwood muttered an assent, and waited to see how this sally was to end.

"Ah! you are going there to-night," repeated Morlache, in some surprise. "Are *you* one of the privileged, then?"

"Of course he is," interposed D'Esmonde, authoritatively.

"Will you do me a very great favour then, my Lord?" said Morlache, "which is to take charge of this small casket. I promised to bring it myself, but it is so late now, and I am so wearied, that I shall feel much bound to you for the service."

"You can easily acquit the debt of obligation, Morlache," said D'Esmonde, "for my Lord was just asking me before you came in, if he could take the liberty of begging the loan of your carriage to take him up to the Moskova. You are aware that it would not be quite proper to take a hired carriage, just now, up to the Villa; that, as the Prince affects to be absent——"

"To be sure," broke in Morlache. "I am but too happy to accommodate your Lordship. Your precaution was both delicate and well thought of. Indeed, I greatly doubt that they would admit a 'fiacre' at all."

"I suppose I should have had to walk from the gate," said Norwood, who now saw the gist of the Abbé's stratagem.

"Morlache's old grey is a passport that requires no *visée*," said D'Esmonde. "You'll meet neither let nor hindrance with him in front of you. You may parody the great Statesman's peroration, and say, 'Where the King cannot enter, he can.' Such is it to be a banker's horse."

Norwood heard little or nothing of this remark; deeply sunk in his own thoughts, he arose abruptly from the table.

"You are not going away, my Lord? You are surely not deserting that flask of Marcobrunner, that we have only tasted?"

But Norwood never heard the words, and continued to follow his own train of reflection. Then, bending over D'Esmonde, he said:

"In case we should require to cross the frontier at Lavenza, must we have passports?"

"Nothing of the kind. There is no police—no inquiry, whatever."

"Good-by, then. If you should not hear *from*, you will hear *of* me, Abbé. There are a few things, which, in the event of accident, I will jot down in writing. You'll look to them for me. Good evening, or good morning—I scarcely know which." And, with all the habitual indolence of his lounging manner, he departed.

D'Esmonde stood for a few seconds silent, and then said:

"Is the noble Viscount deep in your books?"

"Deeper than I wish him to be," said the Jew.

"Have no fears on that account. He'll soon acquit all his debts," said the other. "Good night, Morlache." And with this abrupt leave-taking, he withdrew.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A "SAD EXIT."

THE French Secretary of Legation was just going to-bed as his servant handed him a card from Lord Norwood, with a few words scribbled in pencil.

"Yes, by all means. Tell my Lord to come in," said he; and Norwood entered.

"You remember an old pledge you once made me," said the Viscount, smiling. "I have come to claim it."

"*Diantre!* the case must be pressing that would not wait till daylight."

"So it is; and so you will agree with me in thinking it, when I tell you all," said Norwood. "The first point is, may I reckon upon you?"

"Of course; my word is sacred."

"Secondly, have you pistols that you can depend upon? Mine have been stopped at Milan by the police."

[illegible] best," said the Frenchman [illegible] and in your [illegible] disgrace their maker."

[illegible] and come along with me. This affair must be disposed [illegible].

[illegible] your orders," said the Frenchman, gaily. "I suppose you [illegible] enough to tell me something more, as we go along."

[illegible] nodded an assent, and sat down before the fire, and rested [illegible] his breast.

"Is it a quarrel at play?" asked the Frenchman, after a moment's silence.

"No!" was the abrupt reply.

"All the better. It is the only affair of this kind I cannot endure. Is there a woman in it?"

"Yes."

"Ah! I perceive," said the other, with a laugh. "A married woman?"

"Yes?"

"And who is the happy husband, this time?" asked he, flippantly.

"I am," replied Norwood, in a low and solemn voice.

"*You! you!* I never thought—never suspected *you* of being married, Norwood. Pray, be a little more explicit. Let me hear the whole story."

"Later on, not now. I want to think of something else, at this moment. Are your pistols fine in the trigger?"

"Excessively so; a fly would almost suffice to move them. Is he English?"

"No!"

"Not a countryman of my own, I hope?"

"No. It is Midchikoff, the Russian."

"*Diantre!* what a mark to shoot at. But they tell me that he never does go out—that he refuses this kind of thing."

"He shall not do so, this time," said Norwood, with a vehement energy of manner.

"Well, I'm ready now; but I must say that I should like to hear something of what we are about."

"There will be ample time for all as we go along. We shall drive to the Villa. It is necessary to obtain an interview with himself. This done, I will give the provocation, showing that you are ready and in waiting: there can be no delay."

"But he will need a friend?"

"He must take one of his secretaries—his valet if he prefer it. I'll give no time for evasive negotiation."

"I cannot be a party to an affair like this, Norwood. Whatever the wrong you seek to avenge, this is not the mode to do it."

"Say so at once, then," said Norwood, rising. "Tell me that you gave a rash promise, and are sorry for it. Better the refusal now, than when it be too late to retract."

"You mistake me; I have no wish to unsay one single word I ever spoke to you. I only ask for such an explanation as I have a right to demand."

"You shall know everything: pray spare me telling it twice over. There is no use in opening one's wound till he comes to the surgeon. Enough now, that I tell you, this man owes me a full and fair reparation for a great wrong,—I am equally determined on exacting it. If this does not satisfy you, step into the carriage, and you shall hear the whole story. I can tell it, perhaps, when we are rattling along over the stones in the dark." And, so saying, he sat down, and leaned his head on the table, as though he would not be disturbed. The Frenchman went on with his dressing, rapidly, and at last, pronouncing himself ready, they descended the stairs together in silence, and entered the carriage.

As they drove on, Norwood never spoke; and his companion, respecting perhaps the occasion of his silence, did not utter a word. At last they arrived at the summit of the hill, and looked down upon the city, over which the grey tints of coming day were breaking. The great Duomo and the Palazzo Vecchio lay in massive shadow, and it was only at intervals along the Arno, that a flickering gleam of cold light fell. The scene, in all its calm and stillness, was grand and solemn.

"How unlike the Florence of sun and bright sky—how unlike the brilliant city of dissipation and pleasure!" said Norwood; "and so it is with individuals; we are just what light and shadow make us! Now, listen to me." He then related the whole story of his first meeting with Lola down to the moment of D'Esmonde's revelation. "I know well," said he, "there may be a dozen ways to look on the affair, besides that which I have chosen. I might dispute the marriage—I might disavow the whole proceeding—I might, naturally enough, leave such a woman to her fate; she never could be anything to *me;* but I cannot relinquish the opportunity of a reckoning with this Russian. The insolence of his wealth gives all the venom to this outrage, and I'll shoot him! All the splendour of his riches can avail him but little, now. And, except some more gold upon his coffin, and a richer pall to cover it, he has no advantage over me, ruined and beggared as I am.

"As to my scores with the world at large, I am about quits. *They* cheated *me*, when I was a young, unsuspecting boy, trusting and

disgrace you were heaping on a class who rejected your intimacy. None of this mock-surprise, Sir! If you compel me to it, I'll fling open that door, call all your household around you, and before them I'll insult you, so that even your serf-blood will rebel against the outrage."

"This is madness—downright insanity, my Lord," said Midchikoff, rising and moving towards the bell.

"Not so, Sir," said Norwood, interposing. "My passion is now mastered. You shall not escape on that pretence. There are my pistols—only one of them is loaded—take your choice—for I see that outside of this room I shall seek in vain for satisfaction."

"This would be a murder."

"It shall be, by Heaven, if you delay!" cried Norwood. "I have the right and the will to shoot you like a dog. If there be no honour, is there not even some manhood in your heart? Take your weapon—you hesitate still—take that, then;" and he struck him with his open hand across the face.

Midchikoff snatched the pistol convulsively, and, placing the muzzle on Norwood's breast, fired. With a wild cry, he staggered and fell dead upon the floor. The Prince flung open the door, and rang the bell violently. In a moment the room was filled with servants. "Send Jocasse here," said Midchikoff; and his chief secretary entered in all haste and trepidation. "This is an affair for the Police, Jocasse," said the Prince, coolly. "Send for the Brigadier, and let him come to my room."

"Suicide shows a great '*manque de savoir vivre*,'" said Haggerstone, as the news of the event was circulated through Florence. And the "*mot*" survived the memory of its victim!

CHAPTER XXIX.

"THE SUMMONS."

[illegible] who only knew Vienna in its days of splendour and magnificence, could scarcely have recognised that city as it appeared on the [illegible] of the great revolt which had just convulsed the empire. The great walls were riddled with shot and shell; vast breaches in them [illegible] a view of even more dreadful ruin within:—streets choked up with ruined houses, and wide squares encumbered with blocks of masonry

Nervous Exit.

It was here, formerly, that the most brilliant society of the capital was to be found; here, every night, the carriages were seen to throng, and the whole street glow with the glare of light from brilliant *salons*, or the red flame of the torches borne by the running footmen. The proud aristocracy of every land here met; and names that recalled the great achievements of Generals and Statesmen, were heard in every announcement that resounded along those corridors! But a few of these Palaces were now occupied, and for the most part were the quarters of the Generals of the army. In front of one of the largest, at whose gate two sentinels stood, the street was littered with straw, while the closed shutters and drawn curtains showed that sickness and suffering were busy within. The frequent arrivals, and the passing and repassing of messengers, evinced the interest the sufferer's fate excited; and amongst those who dismounted at the corner of the street, and with cautious steps approached the door, more than one member of the Imperial house was to be seen. He whose fortune inspired all these tokens of regard, was no great nor illustrious General, no proud and distinguished Statesman—he was simply a young Officer of Hussars—a gallant soldier, whose fidelity had been proved under the most trying circumstances—our old acquaintance, Frank Dalton. Relapse after relapse had reduced his strength to the very verge of debility, and each day threatened to be his last. Worn down by pain and suffering, the young soldier bore a look of calm and even happy meaning. His character for loyalty had been not only vindicated by his blood, but through the aid of Walstein, it was shown that he could have known nothing of the conspiracy with which he was charged. Thus re-established in fair fame, he saw himself the object of every care that affection could bestow. The old Count seldom quitted him—Kate never left his bedside. Every attention of kindness, every suggestion of love, was bestowed upon him; and a sick-bed was made the scene of more touching happiness than he had ever known in the proudest hours of his health and vigour. Could he have seen his dear Nelly beside him, he had no more to wish for! To die, without pressing her to his heart, without acknowledging all that he owed to her good counsels, was now his only sorrow; and if, in the stillness of the sick-room, tears would flow heavily along his cheek, and drop, one by one, on his pillow, this was their secret source.

The Count had himself written to Nelly. Kate, too, had despatched a letter, telling of Frank's dangerous condition, and entreating her presence; but no reply had been returned, and they already began to fear that some mishap had occurred, and were obliged to frame all manner of excuses for her absence. Meanwhile, as his strength de-

clined, his impatience increased, and his first question, as day broke, and his last, at night, were, "What tidings of Nelly?" All his faults and errors lay like a load upon his heart, till he could pour out the confession to his dear sister.

The post-hour of each morning was a moment of intense anxiety to him, and the blank look which met his eager glance was the signal for a depression, that weighed down his heart during the day. From long dwelling on this source of sorrow, his mind grew painfully acute as to all that bore upon it; and sometimes he fancied that his Uncle and Kate knew some dreadful fact of poor Nelly, and feared to communicate it. More than once had it occurred to him that she was dead—that she had sunk, broken-hearted and deserted! He did not dare to whisper this suspicion, but he tried to insinuate his fears about her in a hundred ways. To his sickly fancy, their frankness seemed dissimulation, and the very grief they displayed, he read as the misery of an unrevealed calamity!

Kate, with all a woman's quickness, saw what was passing in his mind, and tried her utmost to combat it; but all in vain. To no purpose did she open her whole heart before him, telling of her own sad history and its disappointments. In vain did she point to a bright future, when, strong and in spirits, Frank should accompany her in search of Nelly through every glen and valley of the Tyrol. The impression of some concealment was more powerful than all these, and he but heard them as tales invented to amuse a sick-bed. The morbid sensibility of illness gave a significance to every trivial incident, and Kate dared not whisper in his presence, nor even exchange a look with another, without exciting a whole flood of doubt and suspicion in his mind.

To allay, so far as might be, these disordered terrors, they assumed the utmost frankness in all intercourse with him, and even took pains to exhibit an undisguised freedom on every occasion.

The letters which arrived by each morning's post were always opened in his presence, and his prying, eager glances showed that the precaution was not unneeded.

"What is that?" cried he, suddenly, as Kate, after reading the address of a letter, hastily threw it on the table, and covered it with others. Let me see that, Kate. Who is it for?"

"It bears your name," said she, anxiously, "and has an Irish postmark; but the hand is not known to me."

The youth took the letter in his hand, and sat gazing on it for some minutes together.

"No," said he, at length, "I do not remember to have seen the writing before. Read it, Kate."

She broke the seal, and at once exclaimed, "It is from Doctor Grounsell! Frank—a very dear and kind friend."

She ran her eyes rapidly over the lines as she spoke, and twice her colour came and went, and her hand trembled as it held the paper.

"You have bad news for me?" said the boy, with a slow, but firm utterance, "but so that it be not of Nelly, I can bear anything!"

"It is not of Nelly," said Kate, in a tremulous voice.

"Then let me hear it," said he, calmly.

She tried to read, but the effort was beyond her strength; and, although her lips moved, no sound issued from them. At last she gained sufficient strength to say, "It would agitate you too much, my dear brother, to hear this now. Let us wait for a day or two, till you are stronger, and better able to think about it."

"I have told you already, that if it be not of Nelly, I can hear it with indifference. Read on, then, Kate."

"The meaning of it is this, Frank," cried she, hastily. "There was a fearful crime committed some years back in Ireland—a relative of ours, named Godfrey, was murdered."

"Yes—yes—I know it. Go on," said he, eagerly.

"The circumstances have never yet come to light, and now, it would appear, some efforts are being made to connect our name with this dreadful act; and—and—in fact, Frank, Dr. Grounsell wishes to learn from you where we were residing at the period in question; and if you be possessed of any letters or papers which could show the relations existing between our family and Mr. Godfrey."

"You must let me read this for myself, Kate," said Frank, calmly, taking the letter from her hands; "and now leave me for a while."

With trembling steps and a sinking heart the young girl retired, to pass hours of intense anxiety in her chamber. At last came a servant to say that her brother desired to see her.

"I must set out for Ireland, Kate," said the sick youth, as he arose from his chair.

"For Ireland!" cried she, gazing with terror at his wasted and worn figure.

"A long journey, dearest, but I shall have strength for it, if you'll be my companion!"

"Never to leave you, Frank," cried she; and fell sobbing into his arms.

CHAPTER XXX.

"INISTIOGE."

RICH as Ireland is in picturesque river scenery, we know nothing more beautiful than the valley through which the Nore flows between Thomastown and New Ross. The gently sloping meadows, backed by deep woods, and dotted with cheerful farm-houses, gradually give way to a bolder landscape as you descend the stream and enter a dark gorge, whose high beetling sides throw their solemn shade over the river, receding at last to form a kind of amphitheatre wherein stands the little village of Inistioge.

More like a continental than an Irish hamlet, the cottages are built around a wide open space planted with tall elms and traversed by many a footpath; and here, of a summer night, are to be seen the villagers seated or strolling about in pleasant converse—a scene of rural peace and happiness such as rarely is to be met with in our land of trial and struggle. Did our time or space admit of it, we would gladly loiter in that pleasant spot, gazing from that graceful bridge on the ivy-clad towers, the tall and stately abbey, or the rich woods of that proud demesne, which in every tint of foliage encircles the picture.

That "vale and winding river" were scenes of some of our boyhood's happiest hours, and even years—those stern teachers—have not obliterated the memory! Our task is not, however, with these recollections, and we would now ask our reader to stand with us beneath the shadow of the tall elms, while the little village is locked in slumber.

It is past midnight—all is still and tranquil—a faint moonlight flickers through the leaves and plays a fitful gleam upon the river: one man alone is abroad, and he is seen to traverse the bridge with uncertain steps, stopping at moments as if to listen, and then resuming his solitary watch. A light, the only one in the village, twinkles from a window of the little inn, and the door lies open, for in his impatience he has quitted his chamber to walk abroad in the night air. As the hours wear on, his anxiety seems to increase, and he starts and pauses at every sound of the wind through the trees, and every cadence of the rushing river. At last he hears the tramp of a horse—he bends down to listen—it comes nearer and nearer, and in his feverish impatience he hastens in the direction of the coming noise—"Is that you, Michel?" he cries, in an eager accent.

"No," said he, at length. "I do not remember writing before. Read it, Kate."

She broke the seal, and at once exclaimed, "It' sell! Frank—a very dear and kind friend."

She ran her eyes rapidly over the lines as colour came and went, and her hand trembl

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"The meaning of it i ragement." a fearful crime committ D'Esmonde, bitterly, and the named Godfrey, was el," said the Abbé, after a pause;

"Yes—yes—I kn

"The circumsta er, "by a brief reference to Godfrey's appear, some effo mystery in which, up to this hour, it would ful act; and—a ted all that you had told me of the relationship you where we ltons, and the causes which had broken off their possessed of a se he seemed conversant, though I am unable to between our ew more or less than what I was communicating. I

"You m as forcibly as I deemed safe on the character and habits taking th hinting at his reckless, unprincipled career, and the wild With notions he entertained on every subject. To my great surpass ho I confess to my discomfiture, he stopped me short by saying, say th u would imply, then, that he was the guilty man.'

"I on go too fast, Mr. Grounsell,' said I, calmly; 'I have come to from r and take counsel with you, not to form rash or hasty notions on fi matter of such deep gravity. If the circumstances I shall lay before ou possess the same importance in your eyes that they do in mine, it may be that your own conclusions will be even more than suspicious. I then entered upon the story of Meekins, and how a comrade of his, an Irishman, called Noonan, confessed to him that he was the murderer of Mr. Godfrey: that he had never known him, nor had any intercourse with him; but was employed for the act by old Dalton, who was then residing at Bruges. This Noonan, who was possessed of several letters of

"Yes, D'Esmonde, it is I," replies a voice; and the next moment the horseman has dismounted at his side.

"What have I not suffered since you left this, Michel," said D'Esmonde, as he rested his forehead on the other's shoulder. "There is not an image of terror my mind has not conjured up. Shame, ignominy, ruin, were all before me, and had you stayed much longer away, my brain could not have borne it."

"But D'Esmonde, my friend——"

"Nay, nay, do not reason with me—what I feel—what I suffer—has no relation to the calm influences of reason. I alone can pilot myself through the rocks and quicksands of this channel. Tell me of your mission—how has it fared?"

"Less well than I hoped for," said the other, slowly.

"I thought as much," replied D'Esmonde, in a tone of deep dejection.

"You saw him?"

"Yes, our interview lasted nigh an hour. He received me coldly but courteously, and entered into the question with a kind of calm acquiescence that at first gave me good encouragement."

"To end in disappointment!" cried D'Esmonde, bitterly, and the other made no reply. "Go on, Michel," said the Abbé, after a pause; "tell me all."

"I began," resumed the other, "by a brief reference to Godfrey's murder, and the impenetrable mystery in which, up to this hour, it would appear to be veiled. I related all that you had told me of the relationship between him and the Daltons, and the causes which had broken off their friendship. With these he seemed conversant, though I am unable to say whether he knew more or less than what I was communicating. I dwelt as long and as forcibly as I deemed safe on the character and habits of old Dalton, hinting at his reckless, unprincipled career, and the wild and lawless notions he entertained on every subject. To my great surprise, and I confess to my discomfiture, he stopped me short by saying,

"'You would imply, then, that he was the guilty man.'

"'You go too fast, Mr. Grounsell,' said I, calmly; 'I have come to confer and take counsel with you, not to form rash or hasty notions on a matter of such deep gravity. If the circumstances I shall lay before you possess the same importance in your eyes that they do in mine, it may be that your own conclusions will be even more than suspicious. I then entered upon the story of Meekins, and how a comrade of his, an Irishman, called Noonan, confessed to him that he was the murderer of Mr. Godfrey; that he had never known him, nor had any intercourse with him; but was employed for the act by old Dalton, who was then residing at Bruges. This Noonan, who was possessed of several letters of

Dalton's, had joined a Genoese vessel, fitted out for the slave-trade, and was killed in action. Meekins had frequent conversations with him on the subject of the murder, and, although a stranger from another country, knew every detail of the scene and locality perfectly from description.'

"'Meekins is still living?' asked Doctor Grounsell.

"'Living, and now here,' replied I; at which he gave a start of surprise, and I think of alarm.

"'Is he ready to substantiate his statement on oath?' said he.

"'That he could do so, I have no doubt,' replied I; 'that he will, or that he ought, is perhaps a matter for calm reflection.'

"'How do you mean?' said he, hastily. 'If what he alleges be true, can there be any hesitation as to its publicity?'

"'On that there may be grave doubts, Sir,' said I. 'They, whom the law could have held responsible are already gone before another judgment-seat. Their guilt or innocence have been proven, where deception or error exist not! It is only their blameless descendants that could now pay the penalty of their crime; and it may well be matter for consideration whether they should be exposed to the world's shame, to expiate that wherein they had no share——'

"'Do you yourself believe this man's story?' asked he, abruptly.

"'I see no reason to discredit it,' was my answer. 'There are moments when doubt is more difficult than belief, and this is one of them. He has never varied in his narrative—he tells it to-day as he told it yesterday—he details family circumstances that defy invention, and mentions events and incidents that all tally with facts.'

"'Where was he himself at the time of the murder?'

"'In South America,' he says. 'He had joined one of those patriot expeditions which sailed from Ireland to join Bolivar.'

"'This he can prove, of course?' observed he, shrewdly.

"'I conclude he can,' replied I; 'it never occurred to me to question it.'

"There was an interval after this in which neither of us spoke; at last he said, 'May I ask how you became acquainted with this man—Meekins?'

"'Through a brother clergyman, who was the means of saving his life abroad.'

"'And the intention is,' rejoined he, in a slow and deliberate voice, 'that we should, while believing this man's statement, keep it secret? Would not that amount to a very grand offence—the compromise of a felony?'

"I hesitated as he said this, not knowing well which way the discus-

sion might turn; at last I replied, 'Meekins might refuse his evidence—he might deny that he had ever made these revelations.'

"'In other words,' said he, 'he prefers to sell his testimony for a better price than a Court of Justice would pay for it.'

"'You do not suppose that I could be a party to——'

"'Nay, nay,' cried he, interrupting me; 'not on such grounds as these, but I can well conceive your feeling strongly interested for the blameless and unhappy children. The only question is, how far such sympathies can be indulged against the direct claims of justice?'

"There was a dispassionate calmness in the tone he spoke this, that disarmed my suspicions, D'Esmonde; and it was only when I had left him and was on my way back here, that I perceived what may, perhaps, have been a very great error; for I at once proceeded to lay before him the course I would counsel, and how, by the employment of a very moderate sum, this fellow could be induced to emigrate to America, never to return. After pushing this view with all the force I could, I at last avowed, as if driven to the confession, that another motive had also its weight with me, which was, that my friend and brother Priest, the same who rescued Meekins from his fate, was the natural son of Mr. Godfrey, educated and brought up at his cost, and maintained 'till the period of his death with every requisite of rank and station; that Meekins knew this fact, and would publish it to the world, if provoked to it, and that thus my friend's position at the Court of Rome would be utterly ruined.'

"'He is a Monsignore, then?' asked Grounsell.

"'He is,' replied I, 'and may even yet be more than that.'"

"This was rash, Michel—this was all imprudence," said D'Esmonde, with a heavy sigh. "Go on, what said he then?"

"He waited while I told him, that we sought for no advantages on the score of this relationship; that we preferred no claims whatever against the estate of Mr. Godfrey; that we only sought to bury in oblivion a great crime, and to prevent the publicity of a great shame.

"'It is your belief, then,' said he, staring me fully in the face, 'that Dalton was guilty?'

"'From what is before me,' replied I, 'it is hard to reject that conclusion.'

"'And that this was an act of pure revenge?'

"'Less that, perhaps, than the hope of succeeding to the property by some will of early date; at least, such is the version Meekins's informant gave him.'

"'Aye, aye,' said he, 'that would constitute a motive, of course.'

"'Your advice is, then, that we should make terms with this fellow? Is this also your friend's counsel?'

"'I scarcely can tell you,' replied I. 'My friend is not in any sense a worldly man. His whole thoughts are centred in the cause he serves, and he could only see good or evil in its working on the Church. If his cousins——'

"'His cousins!'

"'Yes, the Daltons—for they are such—deem this the fitting course, he is ready to adopt it. If they counsel differently, I can almost answer for his compliance.'

"'You can give me time to communicate with Dalton? He is at Vienna.'

"'Yes, if you agree with me in this view of the case, and think that such will be Dalton's opinion also; otherwise it will be difficult to secure this fellow's secrecy much longer. He knows that he is in possession of a deeply important fact; he feels the impunity of his own position; and to-morrow or next day he may threaten this, that, or t'other. In fact, he believes that Lady Hester Onslow herself has no title to the estate, if he were disposed to reveal all he knows.'

"'Can I see him?' asked Grounsell.

"'Of course you can; but it would be useless. He would affect an utter ignorance of everything, and deny all knowledge of what we have been talking.'

"'You will give me some hours to think over this?' asked he, after a pause.

"'I had rather that you could come to a quicker resolve,' said I; 'the fellow's manner is menacing and obtrusive. I have perhaps too long delayed this visit to you; and should he suspect that we are hesitating, he may go before a magistrate, and make his deposition before we are aware of it.'

"'You shall hear from me this evening, Sir. Where shall I address my note?'

"'The Rev. Michel Cahill—the Inn at Inistioge,' replied I. And so we parted."

"We must leave this at once, Michel," said D'Esmonde, after a brief interval of silence. "Grounsell may possibly come over here himself. He must not see me; still less must he meet with Meekins. We have gone too fast here—much too fast."

"But you told me that we had not a moment to lose."

"Nor have we, Michel; but it is as great an error to overrun your game as to lag behind the scent. I distrust this Doctor."

"So do I, D'Esmonde. But what can he do?"

"We must quit this place," said the other, not heeding the question. "There is a small wayside public, called the 'Rore,' about five miles

away. We can wait there for a day, at least. I almost wish that we had never embarked in this, Michel," said he, thoughtfully. "I am seldom faint-hearted, but I feel I know not what of coming peril. You know well that this fellow Meekins is not to be depended on. When he drinks he would reveal any and everything. I myself cannot determine whether to credit or reject his testimony. His insolence at one moment, his slavish, abject terror at another, puzzle and confound me."

"You have been too long an absentee from Ireland, D'Esmonde, or they would present no difficulties to your judgment. At every visit I make to our county-gaol I meet with the self-same natures, torn, as it were, by opposite influences—the passions of this world, and the terrors of that to come."

"Without the Confessional, who could read them!" exclaimed D'Esmonde.

"How true that is!" cried the other. "What false interpretations, what mistaken views, are taken of them! And so is it—we, who alone know the channel, are never to be the Pilots!"

"Say not so," broke in D'Esmonde, proudly. "We are, and we shall be! Ours will be the guidance, not alone of them, but of those who rule them. Distrust what you will, Michel, be faint-hearted how you may, but never despair of the glorious Church. Her triumph is already assured. Look at Austria, at Spain, at all Northern Italy. Look at Protestant Prussia, trembling for the fate of her Rhine provinces. Look at England herself, vacillating between the game of conciliation and the perils of her unlimited bigotry. Where are we not victorious? Ours is the only Despotism that ever smote two-handed—crushing a Monarchy here, and a People there—proclaiming Divine right, or asserting the human inheritance of Freedom! Whose banner but ours ever bore the double insignia of Rule and Obedience?—ours, the Great Faith, equal to every condition of mankind, and to every age and every people? Never, never despair of it!"

D'Esmonde sat down, and covered his face with his hands; and when he arose, his pale features and bloodless lips showed the strong reaction from a paroxysm of intense passion.

"Let us leave this, Michel," said he, in a broken voice. "The little Inn I speak of is not too distant for a walk, and if we start at once we shall reach it before daybreak. While you awake Meekins, and arrange all within, I will stroll slowly on, before." And, thus saying, D'Esmonde moved away, leaving the others to follow.

D'Esmonde was more than commonly thoughtful, even to depression. He had been but a few days in Ireland, but every hour of that time had

revealed some new disappointment to him. There was all that he could wish of religious zeal, there was devotion and faith without limit amongst the people; but there was no unity of action, no combination of purpose, amongst those who led them. Discursive and rash efforts of individuals were suffered to disturb well-laid measures and reveal long-meditated plans. Vain and frivolous controversies in newspapers, petty wars of petty localities, wasted energies, and distracted counsels. There was none of that organisation, that stern discipline, which at Rome regulated every step, and ordained every movement of their mighty host. "This," muttered he to himself, "is an army without Field-Officers. Their Guerilla notions must be henceforth exchanged for habits of military obedience. Little think they that their future General is now the solitary pedestrian of a lonely road at midnight." The recurrence to himself and his own fortunes was one of those spells which seemed to possess an almost magical influence over him. From long dwelling on the theme, he had grown to believe that he was destined by Heaven for the advancement, if not the actual triumph, of the Great Cause of the Church; and that he, whose origin was obscure and ignoble, could now sit down at the council of the Princes of the Faith, and be heard, as one whose words were commands, was always sufficient evidence that he was reserved by Fate for high achievements. Under the spell of this conviction he soon rallied from his late dejection, and his uplifted head and proud gait now showed the ambitious workings of his heart. "Aye," cried he, aloud,—"the first Prince of the Church who for above a century has dared them to defiance! *That* is a proud thought, and well may nerve the spirit that conceives it to courageous action."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"THE MANOR HOUSE OF CORRIG O'NEAL."

WHILE we leave, for a brief space, the Abbé D'Esmonde to pursue his road, we turn once more to the peaceful scene wherein we found him. Mayhap there be in this dalliance something of that fond regret, that sorrowful lingering, with which a traveller halts to look down upon a view he may never see again! Yes, dear reader, we already feel that the hour of our separation draws nigh, when we shall no more be fellow-journeyers, and we would fain loiter on this pleasant spot, to tarry even a few moments longer in your company.

Passing downwards beneath that graceful bridge, which with a rare felicity seems to heighten, and not to impair the effect of the scene, the river glides along between the rich-wooded hills of a handsome demesne, and where, with the most consummate taste, every tint of foliage, and every character of verdure, has been cultivated to heighten the charm of the landscape. The spray-like larch, the wide-leaved sycamore, the solemn pine, the silver-trunked birch, all blending their various hues into one harmonious whole—the very perfection of a woodland picture. As if reluctant to leave so fair a scene, the stream winds and turns in a hundred bendings—now forming little embayments among the jutting rocks, and now, listlessly loitering, it dallies with the gnarled trunks of some giant beech that bends into the flood.

Emerging from these embowering woods, the river enters a new and totally different tract of country—the hills, bare of trees, are higher, almost mountainous in character, with outlines fantastic and rugged. These, it is said, were once wooded too; they present, however, little remains of forest, save here and there a low oak scrub. The sudden change from the leafy groves, ringing with many a "wood note wild," to the dreary silence of the dark region, is complete as you approach the foot of a tall mountain, at whose base the river seems arrested, and is in reality obliged by a sudden bend to seek another channel. This is Corrig O'Neal; and here, in a little amphitheatre, surrounded by mountains of lesser size, stood the ancient manor of which mention has been more than once made in these pages.

It is but a short time back and there stood there an ancient house, whose character, half-quaint, half-noble, might have made it seem a French Château. The tall high-pitched roof, pierced with many a window—the richly-ornamented chimneys—the long terrace, with its grotesque statues, and the intricate traceries of the old gate itself—all evidencing a taste not native to our land. The very stiff and formal avenue of lime-trees that led direct to the door had reference to a style of landscape-gardening more consonant with foreign notions, even without the fountains, which, with various strange groups of allegorical meaning, threw their tiny jets among the drooping flowers. At the back of the house lay a large garden, or rather what constituted both garden and orchard; for, although near the windows trim flower-beds and neatly gravelled walks were seen, with rare and blossoming plants, as you advanced, the turf usurped the place of the cultivated ground, and the apple, the pear, and the damson, formed a dense, almost impenetrable shade.

Even on the brightest day in spring, when the light played and danced upon the shining river, with blossoming cherry-trees, and yellow cro-

cuses in the grass, and fair soft daffodils along the water's edge, smiling like timid beauties, when, the gay May-fly skimmed the rippling stream, and the strong trout splashed up to seize him—even then, with life, and light, and motion all around, there was an air of sadness on this spot—a dreary gloom, that fell upon the spirits less like sudden grief than as the memory of some old and almost forgotten sorrow. The frowning aspect of that stern mountain, which gave its name to the place, and which in its rugged front showed little touch of time or season, seemed to impress a mournful character on the scene. However it was, few passed the spot without feeling its influence, nor is it likely that now, when scarcely a trace of its once-inhabited home remains, its aspect is more cheering.

In a dark wainscoted room of this gloomy abode, and on a raw and dreary day, our old acquaintance Lady Hester sat, vainly endeavouring between the fire and the screen to keep herself warm, while shawls, muffs, and mantles were heaped in most picturesque confusion around her. A French novel and a Blenheim spaniel lay at her feet, a scarce-begun piece of embroidery stood at one side of her, and an untasted cup of coffee on a small table at the other. Pale, and perhaps seeming still more so from the effect of her deep mourning, she lay back in her chair, and, with half-closed lids and folded arms, appeared as if courting sleep—or at least unconsciousness.

She had lain thus for above half an hour, when a slight rustling noise—a sound so slight as to be scarcely audible—caught her attention, and, without raising her head, she asked, in a faint tone,

"Is there any one there?"

"Yes, my Lady. It is Lisa," replied her maid, coming stealthily forward, till she stood close behind her chair.

"Put some of that thing—peat, turf, or whatever it is—on the fire, child. Has the post arrived?"

"No, my Lady; they say that the floods have detained the mails, and that they will be fully twelve hours late."

"Of course they will," sighed she, "and, if there should be anything for *me*, they will be carried away."

"I hope not, my Lady."

"What's the use of your hoping about it, child; or, if you must hope, let it be for something worth while. Hope that we may get away from this miserable place, that we may once more visit a land where there are sunshine and flowers, and live where it repays one for the bore of life."

"I'm sure I do hope it with all my heart, my Lady."

"Of course you do, child. Even you must feel the barbarism of this wretched country. Have those things arrived from Dublin yet."

"Yes, my Lady; but you never could wear them. The bonnet is a great unwieldy thing, nearly as big and quite as heavy as a Life Guardsman's helmet, and the mantle is precisely like a hearth-rug, with sleeves to it. They are specially commended to your Ladyship's notice, as being all of Irish manufacture."

"What need to say so?" sighed Lady Hester. "Does not every lock on every door, every scissors that will not cut, every tongs that will not hold, every parasol that turns upside down, every carriage that jolts, and every shoe that pinches you, proclaim its nationality?"

"Dr. Grounsell says, my Lady, that all the fault lies in the wealthier classes, who prefer everything to native industry."

"Dr. Grounsell's a fool, Lisa. Nothing shall ever persuade me that Valenciennes and Brussels are not preferable to that ornament for fire-places and fauteuils, called Limerick lace, and Genoa velvet a more becoming wear; then the O'Connell frieze—but, have done with this discussion, you have already put me out of temper by the mention of that odious man's name."

"I at least saved your Ladyship from seeing him this morning."

"How so? Has he been here?"

"Twice already, my Lady; and threatens another visit. He says that he has something very important to communicate, and his pockets were stuffed with papers."

"Oh, dear me! how I dread him and his parchments! Those terrible details, by which one discovers how little is bequeathed to them, and how securely it is tied up against every possibility of enjoying it. I'd rather be a negro slave on a coffee plantation, than a widow with what is called a 'high-principled Trustee,' over my fortune."

"There he comes again, my Lady; see how fast he is galloping up the avenue."

"Why will that pony never stumble? Amiable and worthy folk break their necks every day of the week—fathers of families and unbeneficed clergymen. Assurance companies should certainly deal lightly with crusty old bachelors and disagreeable people, for they bear charmed lives."

"Am I to admit him, my Lady?" asked the maid, moving towards the door.

"Yes—no—I really cannot—but perhaps I must. It is only putting off the evil day. Yes, Lisa, let him come in, but mind that you tell him I am very poorly—that I have had a wretched night, and am quite unfit for any unpleasant news, or indeed for anything like what he calls business. Oh dear! oh dear! the very thought of parchment will make me hate sheep to the last hour of my life, and I have come to detest

the very sight of my own name, from signing 'Hester Onslow' so often."

It must be said, there was at least no hypocrisy in her Ladyship's lamentations; if the cause of them was not all-sufficient, the effects were to the full what she averred, and she was, or believed herself to be, the most miserable of women. Sir Stafford's will had bequeathed to her his Irish property, on the condition of her residing upon it at least six months every two years—a clause whose cruelty, she—whether with or without reason we know not—attributed to the suggestion of Doctor Grounsell. To secure eighteen months of unlimited liberty she was undergoing her captivity in what, must be acknowledged, was a spirit the very reverse of that the testator intended. So far from taking any interest in the country, its people, or its prospects, she only saw in it a dreary imprisonment, saddened by bad weather, bad spirits, and solitude. Nor were her griefs all causeless. Her position was greatly fallen from the possession of a fortune almost without bounds to the changeful vicissitudes of an Irish property. Norwood's dreadful death, wrapped in all the mystery which involved it, shocked her deeply, although in reality the event relieved her from a bondage she had long felt to be insupportable; and lastly, the Romanism, in which she had, so to say, invested all her "loose capital" of zeal and enthusiasm, had become a terrible disappointment. The gorgeous splendour of Italian Popery found a miserable representative in Irish Catholicism. The meanly-built Irish chapel, with its humble congregation, was a sorry exchange for the architectural grandeur and costly assemblage gathered within the Duomo of Florence, or beneath the fretted roof of "St. John of Lateran."

In all the sublimity of pealing music, of full-toned choirs, of incense floating up into realms of dim distance, there were but the nasal sing-song of a parish priest, and the discordant twang of a dirty acolyte! And what an interval separated the vulgar manners of the village curate from the polished addresses of the Roman Cardinal! How unlike the blended pretension and cringing slavery of the one was to the high-bred bearing and courtly urbanity of, the other. A visit from "Father John" was an actual infliction. To receive his Eminence was not only an honour but a sincere pleasure. Who, like him, to discuss every topic of the world and its fashionable inhabitants! touching every incident with a suave mellowness of remark that, like the light through a stained glass-window, warmed, while it softened, that which it fell upon. Who could throw over the frailties of fashion such a graceful cloak of meek forgiveness, that it seemed actually worth while to sin to be pardoned with such affection. All the pomp and circumstance of Romanism, as seen in its own capital, associated with rank, splendour, high dignity, and names

illustrious in story, form a strong contrast to its vulgar pretensions in Ireland. It is so essentially allied to ceremonial and display, that when these degenerate into poverty and meanness, the effect produced is always bordering on the ludicrous. Such, at least, became the feeling of Lady Hester as she witnessed those travesties of grandeur, the originals of which had left her awe-stricken and amazed.

Shorn of fortune, deprived of all the illusions which her newly-adopted creed had thrown around her, uncheered by that crowd of flatterers which used to form her circle, is it any wonder if her spirits and her temper gave way, and that she fancied herself the very type of misery and desertion? The last solace of such minds is in the pity they bestow upon themselves; and here she certainly excelled, and upon no occasion more forcibly than when receiving a visit from Doctor Grounsell.

"Doctor Grounsell, my Lady," said a servant; and, at the words, that gentleman entered.

A heavy great-coat, with numerous capes, a low-crowned glazed hat, and a pair of old-fashioned "hessians," into which his trousers were tucked, showed that he had not stooped to any artifices of toilet to win favour with her Ladyship. As she bowed slightly to him, she lifted her glass to her eye, and then dropped it suddenly with a gentle simper, as though to say that another glance would have periled her gravity.

"Winter has set in early, Madam," said he, approaching the fire, "and with unusual severity. The poor are great sufferers this year."

"I'm sure I agree with you," sighed Lady Hester. "I never endured such cold before!"

"I spoke of the 'Poor,' Madam," retorted he, abruptly.

"Well, Sir, and has any one a better right to respond in their name than I have? Look around you, see where I'm living, and how, and then answer me!"

"Madam," said Grounsell, sternly, and fixing his eyes steadily on her as he spoke, "I have ridden for two hours of this morning over part of that tract which is your estate. I have visited more than a dozen—I will not call them houses, but hovels. There was fever in some, ague in others, and want, utter want in all; and yet I never heard one of the sufferers select himself as the special mark of misfortune, but rather allude to his misery as part of that common calamity to which flesh is heir. 'God help the Poor!' was the prayer, and they would have felt shamed to have invoked the blessing on themselves alone."

"I must say, that if you have been to see people with typhus, and perhaps small-pox, it shows very little consideration to come and visit *me* immediately after, Sir."

Grounsell's face grew purple, but with a great effort he repressed the reply that was on his lips, and was silent.

"Of course, then, these poor creatures can pay nothing, Sir."

"Nothing, Madam."

"Che bella cosa! an Irish property!" cried she, with a scornful laugh; "and, if I mistake not, Sir, it was to your kind intervention and influence that I am indebted for this singular mark of my husband's affection?"

"Quite true, Madam. I had supposed it to be possible—just possible—that by connecting your personal interests with duties, that you might be reclaimed from a life of frivolity and idleness, to an existence of active and happy utility, and this, without any flattering estimates of your qualities, Madam."

"Oh, Sir, this is a very needless protest," said she, bowing and smiling.

"I repeat, Madam, that without any flattering estimate of your qualities, I saw quite enough to convince me that kindness and benevolence were just as easy to you as their opposites."

"Why, you have become a courtier, Sir," said she, with a smile of sly malice.

"I'm sorry for it, Madam; I'd as soon be mistaken for a hairdresser or a dancing-master. But to return. Whether I was correct or not in my theory would appear to be of little moment, another, and more pressing view of the case, usurping all our interests, which is no less, Madam, than your actual right and title to this estate at all."

Lady Hester leant forward in her chair as he said this, and in a low but unshaken voice, replied, "Do I understand you aright, Sir,—that the title to this property is contested?"

"Not yet, Madam; there is no claim set up as yet; but there is every likelihood that there will be such. Rumours have gradually grown into open discussions—threatening notices have been sent to me by post, and stories, which at first I had deemed vague and valueless, have assumed a degree of importance from the details by which they were accompanied. In fact, Madam, without any clue to the nature or direct drift of the plot, I can yet see that a formidable scheme is being contrived, the great agent of which is to be menace."

"Oh, dear, what a relief it would be to me, were I quite certain of all this!" exclaimed Lady Hester, with a deep sigh.

"What a relief? did you say—what a relief, Madam?" cried Grounsell, in amazement.

"Yes, Sir, that was precisely the word I used."

"Then I must have blundered most confoundedly, Madam, in my

effort to explain myself. I was endeavouring to show you that your claim to the estate might be disputed?"

"Very well, Sir, I perfectly understood you."

"You did, eh? You perceive that you might possibly lose the property, and you acquiesce calmly——"

"Nay, more, Sir, I rejoice sincerely at the very thought of it."

"Well, then, upon my——eh? May the Devil—I beg pardon, Madam, but this is really such a riddle to me, that I must confess my inability to unravel it."

"Shall I aid you, Sir?" said Lady Hester, with an easy smile on her features. "When bequeathing this estate to me, Sir Stafford expressly provided, that if, from any political convulsion, Ireland should be separated from her union with Great Britain, or if by course of law a substantial claim was established to the property by another, that I should be recompensed for the loss by an income of equal amount derived from the estate of his son, George Onslow, at whose discretion it lay to allocate any portion of his inheritance he deemed suitable for the purpose."

"All true, Madam—quite true," broke in Grounsell; "and the Solicitor-General's opinion is, that the provision is perfectly nugatory—not worth sixpence. It has not one single tie of obligation, and, from its vagueness, is totally inoperative."

"In law, Sir, it may be all that you say," replied Lady Hester, calmly; "but I have yet to learn that this is the appeal to which Captain Onslow would submit it."

Grounsell stared at her; and, for the first time in all his life, he thought her handsome. That his own features revealed the admiration he felt, was also plain enough, and Lady Hester was very far from being insensible to the tribute.

"So that, Madam," cried he, at length, "you prefer insecurity to certainty."

"Say rather, Sir, that I have more confidence in the honourable sentiments of an English gentleman, than I have in the solvency of a poor and wretched peasantry. Up to this very hour I have known nothing except the claims upon myself. I don't like the climate; and I am certain that my neighbours do not like *me*—in fact, I have neither the youth nor the enterprise suited to a new country."

"Why, good Heavens! Madam, it isn't New Zealand we're in!" cried Grounsell, angrily.

"Perhaps not," sighed she, languidly; "but it is just as strange to *me*."

"I see, Madam," said Grounsell, rising, "my plan was a bad one—a

wing in the Borghese Palace—a spacious apartment of the Corsini, on the Arno—or even the first-floor of the Moncenigo, at Venice, would have been a happier choice than a gloomy old mansion on the banks of an Irish river."

"Oh! do not speak of it, Sir," cried she, enthusiastically. "Do not remind me of starry skies, and the deep blue Adriatic, in this land of cloud and fog, where even the rain is 'dirty water.' Pray make the very weakest defence of my claim to this inheritance. I only ask to march out with my baggage, and do not even stipulate for the honours of war. Let me have George's address."

"You'll not need it, Madam; he will be here within a few days. He has been promoted to a majority, for his conduct in the field, and returns to England, covered with praise and honours."

"What delightful news, Doctor Grounsell; you are actually charming, this morning." The Doctor bowed stiffly at the compliment, and she went on: "I often thought that you could be amiable, if you would only let yourself; but, like the Cardinal Gualterino, you took up the character of Bear, and 'Bear' you would be at all times and seasons; and then those horrid coats, that you would persist in wearing—how you ever got them of that odious brown, I can't think—they must have dyed the wool to order—not but that I think your shoes were worst of all."

Grounsell understood too well the wordy absurdity with which her Ladyship, on the least excitement, was accustomed to launch forth, quite forgetful of all the impertinence into which it betrayed her. He, therefore, neither interposed a remark, nor seemed in any way conscious of her observation, but coldly waiting till she had concluded, he said:

"Some other of your Ladyship's friends are also expected in this neighbourhood—the Daltons!"

"What—my dear Kate?"

"Yes; Miss Kate Dalton, accompanied by her brother and uncle. I have just been to order apartments for them in the Hotel at Kilkenny."

"But they must come, here. I shall insist upon it, Doctor. This is a point on which I will accept no refusal."

"The occasion which calls them to Ireland, Madam, and of which you shall hear all, hereafter, would totally preclude such an arrangement."

"More mystery, Sir?" exclaimed she.

"Another side of the same one, Madam," rejoined he, drily.

"What delightful news, to think I shall see my dearest Kate again. I am dying to know all about Russia, and if the ladies do wear pearls in

morning toilette, and whether tourquoise are only seen in fans and parasol handles. What splendour she must have seen!"

"Humph!" said Grounsell, with a short shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh! I know you despise all these things, and you hate caviare. Then, I want to know about the Prince; why the match was broken off; and from what cause she refused that great settlement, some thousand roubles. How much is a rouble, by-the-way, Doctor?"

"I really cannot tell you, Madam," said he, bluntly, who saw that she was once more "wide a-field."

"She'll tell me all herself, and everything about Russia. I want to hear about the knout, and the malachite, and that queer habit of gambling before dinner is announced. I'm sure I should like St. Petersburgh. And the brother, what is he like?"

"I only know, Madam, that he is a great invalid, not yet recovered from his wounds!"

"How interesting; he was in the Patriot army, was he not?"

"He fought for the Emperor, Madam; pray, make no mistake in that sense."

"Oh, dear! how difficult it is to remember all these things; and yet I knew it perfectly when I was at Florence!—all about the Kaiser-Jägers, and the Crociati, and the Croats, and the rest of them. It was the Crociati, or the Croats—I forget which—ate little children. It's perfectly true, Guardarelli, when he was a prisoner, saw an infant roasting for Radetzky's own table!"

"I would beg of you, Madam, not to mention this fact to the Field-Marshal, Miss Kate Dalton's uncle."

"Oh! of course not; and I trust he will not expect that we could provide him with such delicacies here. Now, Doctor, how shall we amuse these people; what can we do?"

"Remember, first of all, Madam, that their visit to Ireland is not an excursion of pleasure——"

"Oh, I can perfectly conceive *that!*" interrupted she, with a look of irony.

"I was about to remark that an affair of deep importance was the cause of their journey——"

"More business!" broke she in again. "After all, then, I suppose I am not much more miserable than the rest of the world. Everybody would seem to have, what you call, 'affairs of importance.'"

"Upon my word, Madam, you have made me totally forget *mine*, then," said Grounsell, jumping up from his seat, and looking at his watch. "I came here prepared to make certain explanations, and ask

your opinion on certain points. It is now two o'clock, and I have not even opened the matter in hand."

Lady Hester laughed heartily at his distress, and continued to enjoy her mirth as he packed up his scattered papers, buttoned his great-coat, and hurried away, without even the ceremony of a leave-taking.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE RORE."

D'ESMONDE and his friend Michel sat beside the fire in a small parlour of the wayside public-house called the Rore. They were both thoughtful and silent, and in their moody looks might be read the signs of brooding care. As for the Abbé, anxiety seemed to have worn him like sickness; for his jaws were sunk and hollow, while around his eyes deep circles of a dusky purple were strongly marked.

It was not without reason that they were thus moved; since Meekins, who hitherto rarely or never ventured abroad, had, on that morning, gone to the fair of Graigue, a village some few miles away, where he was recognised by a farmer—an old man, named Lenahan—as the steward of the late Mr. Godfrey. It was to no purpose that he assumed all the airs of a stranger to the country, and asked various questions about the gentry and the people. The old farmer watched him long and closely, and went home fully satisfied that he had seen Black Sam—the popular name by which he was known on the estate. In his capacity of bailiff, Black Sam had been most unpopular in the country. Many hardships were traced to his counsels; and it was currently believed that Mr. Godfrey would never have proceeded harshly against a tenant except under his advice. This character, together with his mysterious disappearance after the murder, were quite sufficient, in peasant estimation, to connect him with the crime; and no sooner had Lenahan communicated his discovery to his friends, than they, one and all, counselled him to go up to the Doctor—as Grounsell was called on the property—and ask his advice.

The moment Grounsell learned that the suspected man called himself Meekins, he issued a warrant for his arrest; and so promptly was it executed, that he was taken on that very evening, as he was returning to the Rore. The tidings only reached the little Inn after nightfall, and it was in gloomy confabulation over them that the two Priests were now seated. The countryman who had brought the news was

present when the Police arrested Sam, and was twice called back into the parlour, as D'Esmonde questioned him on the circumstance.

It was after a long interval of silence, that the Abbé, for the third time, summoned the peasant before him.

"You have not told me under what name they arrested him. Was it Meekins?"

"The Sergeant said, 'You call yourself Meekins, my good man?' and the other said, 'Why not?' 'Oh, no reason in life,' says the sergeant, 'but you must come with us—that's all.' 'Have you a warrant for what you're doing?' says he. 'Aye,' says the Polis; 'you broke yer bail——'"

"Yes, yes," broke in D'Esmonde, "you mentioned all that already. And Meekins showed no fear on being taken?"

"No more than your Reverance does this minute. Indeed, I never see a man take it so easy. 'Mind what you're doing,' says he; 'for though I'm a poor man, I have strong friends, that won't see me wronged.' And then he said something about one 'Father Mathew,' but whether it was you, or that other Clergyman, there, I don't know."

"They took him to Thomastown?"

"No, your Reverance—to Kilkenny."

"That will do, my good man," said D'Esmonde, with a nod of his head; and then, as the door closed behind him, added, "You see, Michel, I was right in my fears of this Doctor. The evasive terms of his note, too, confirmed my suspicions—that 'desire for further time in a matter of such great difficulty.' We have thrown him on the scent, and he is now in full cry after the game. Shame upon us!—shame! that such as he, can foil us at our own weapons. I see his plan clearly enough. He is either in possession of some secret fact of this man's early life, which can be employed as a menace to extort a confession from him, or he is about to work on him by bribery. Now, as to the former, I am perfectly at ease. What I, with every agency of the Church, have failed to elicit, I can safely defy the Layman's craft to detect. As to the effect of a bribe, I am far from being so certain."

"And in either case the result concerns you but little," said Cahill. "The fellow has nothing in his power against *you*."

"Nothing," said D'Esmonde. "I never left myself in the hands of such as he! It will, of course, be disagreeable to me, that our intercourse should be made public. The Orange press will know how to connect our intimacy, with a thousand schemes and subtleties that I never dreamed of; and, more offensive still, the assumed relationship to Mr. Godfrey will afford a fruitful theme for sneer and sarcasm! I foresee it all, my good Michel, and, worst of all, I perceive how this

publicity will mar higher and nobler objects. The Sacred College will never make a Prince of the Church, of one, whose name has been sullied by the slang of Journalism! These are the dangers to be averted here. You must contrive to see this man at once—to assure him of our interest and protection, if he be but discreet and careful. He may safely deny all knowledge of the circumstances to which we alluded. We are the only persons to whom he made these revelations. He has only to assume an ignorance of everything. Impress this upon him, Michel; for if they can involve him in a narrative, be it ever so slight or vague, these lawyers exercise a kind of magic power, in what is called cross-examination, and can detect a secret fact by tests as fine as those by which the chemist discovers a grain of poison. Would that I could see him, myself; but this might be imprudent."

"Trust all to me, D'Esmonde; and believe me, that with men like him, habit has taught me better how to deal, than you, with all your higher skill, could accomplish. I will contrive to see him to-night, or early to-morrow. The under-turnkey was from my own parish, and I can make my visit as if to *him*."

"How humiliating is it," cried D'Esmonde, rising and pacing the room—"how humiliating to think that incidents like these are to sway and influence us in our road through life; but so it is, the great faults that men commit are less dangerous than are imprudent intimacies and ill-judged associations. It is not on the high bluff or the bold headland that the craft is shipwrecked, but on small sunken rock—some miserable reef beneath the waves! Could we but be 'Penny wise' in morals, Michel, how rich we should be in knowledge of life! I never needed this fellow—never wanted his aid in any way! The unhappy mention of Godfrey's name—the spell, that in some shape or other has worked on my heart through life—first gave him an interest in my eyes, and so, bit by bit, I have come to be associated with him, 'till, would you believe it, I cannot separate myself from him. Has it ever occurred to you, Michel, that the Evil One sometimes works his ends by infusing into the nature of some chance intimate, that species of temptation by which courageous men are so easily seduced—I mean that love of hazard—that playing with fire, so intoxicating in its excitement? I am convinced, that to *me* no bait could be so irresistible. Tell me that the earth is mined, and you invest it with a charm that all the verdure of 'Araby the Blest' could never give it! I love to handle steel when the lightning is playing; not, mark me, from any contempt of life, far less in any spirit of blasphemous defiance, but simply for the glorious sentiment of peril. Be assured, that when all other excitements pall upon

the mind, this one survives in all its plenitude, and, as the Poet says of Avarice, becomes a good 'old gentlemanly vice.'"

"You will come along with me, D'Esmonde?" said the other, whose thoughts were concentrated on the business before him.

"Yes, Michel, I am as yet unknown here; and it may be, too, that this Meekins might wish to see me. We must take good care, while we avoid any public notice, that this fellow should not think himself deserted by us."

"The very point on which I was reflecting, D'Esmonde. We can talk over this as we go along."

As the two Priests affected to be engaged on a kind of mission to collect subscriptions for some sacred purpose, their appearance or departure excited no feeling of astonishment, and the Landlord of "The Rore" saw them prepare to set out without expressing the least surprise. The little "low-backed car," the common conveyance of the people at fair and market, was soon at the door; and seated in this, and well protected against the weather by rugs and blankets, they began their journey.

"This is but a sorry substitute for the scarlet-paneled coach of the Cardinal, D'Esmonde," said his companion, smiling.

A low, faint sigh was all the answer the other made, and so, they went their way in silence.

The day broke drearily and sad-looking; a thin, cold rain was falling, and, from the leaden sky above, to the damp earth beneath, all was gloomy and depressing. The peasantry they passed on the road were poor-looking and meanly clad. The houses on the wayside were all miserable to a degree; and while his companion slept, D'Esmonde was deep in his contemplation of these signs of poverty. "No!" said he, at last, as if summing up the passing reflections of his own mind. "This country is not ripe for the great changes we are preparing. The gorgeous splendour of the Church would but mock this misery. The rich robe of the Cardinal would be but an insult to the ragged coat of the peasant! England must be our field. Ireland must be content with a Missionary Priesthood! Italy, indeed, has poverty, but there is an intoxication in the life of that land which defies it. The sun, the sky, the blue water, the vineyards, the groves of olive, and the fig—the light-headedness that comes of an existence where no fears invade—no gloomy to-morrow has ever threatened. These are the elements to baffle all the cares of narrow fortune, and hence the gifts which make men true believers! In climates such as this, men brood, and think, and ponder. Uncheered from without they turn within, and then come doubts and hesitations—the fatal craving to know that which they may not! Of a truth these regions of the north

are but ill suited to our glorious Faith, and Protestantism must shun the sun, as she does the light of reason itself."

"What! are you preaching, D'Esmonde?" cried his friend, waking up at the energetic tone of the Abbé's voice. "Do you fancy yourself in the pulpit? But here we are, close to the town. We had better dismount now, and proceed on foot."

Having dismissed their humble equipage, the two friends walked briskly along, and entered the city, which, even at this early hour, was filling for its weekly market.

D'Esmonde took up his quarters at once at a small Inn close by the castle-gate, and the Priest Cahill immediately proceeded to the Gaol. He found no difficulty in obtaining access to his acquaintance the under-turnkey, but, to his disappointment, all approach to Meekins was strictly interdicted. "The magistrates were here," said the Turnkey, "till past midnight with him, and that English agent of the Corrig O'Neal estate was along with them. What took place I cannot even guess, for it was done in secret. I only overheard one of the gentlemen remark as he passed out, 'That fellow is too deep for us all; we'll make nothing of him.'"

Cahill questioned the man closely as to what the arrest related, and whether he had heard of any allegation against Meekins; but he knew nothing whatever, save that he had broken his bail some years before. The strictest watch was enjoined over the Prisoner, and all intercourse from without rigidly denied. To the Priest's inquiries about Meekins himself, the turnkey replied by saying that he had never seen any man with fewer signs of fear or trepidation. "Whatever they have against him," added he, "he's either innocent, or he defies them to prove him guilty."

Cahill's entreaties were all insufficient to make the turnkey disobey his orders. Indeed, he showed that the matter was one of as much difficulty as danger, the chief Gaoler being specially interested in the case by some observation of one of the Justices.

"You can at least carry a message for me?" said the Priest, at last.

"It's just as much as I dare do," replied the other.

"You incur no risk whatever, so far," continued Cahill. "The poor man is my sacristan, and I am deeply interested for him. I only heard of his being arrested last night, and you see I've lost no time in coming to see after him. Tell him this. Tell him that I was here at daybreak, and that I'll do my best to get leave to speak with him during the day. Tell him, moreover, that, if I shouldn't succeed in this, not to be downhearted, for that we—a friend of mine and myself—will not desert him

nor see him wronged. And, above all, tell him to say nothing whatever to the magistrates. Mind me well—not a syllable of any kind."

"I mistake him greatly," said the Turnkey, "or he's the man to take a hint quick enough, particularly if it's for his own benefit."

"And so it is—his own, and no other's," rejoined the Priest. "If he but follow this advice, I'll answer for his being liberated before the week ends. Say, also, that I'd send him some money, but that it might draw suspicion on him; and for the present it is better to be cautious."

Before Cahill left the prison, he reiterated all his injunctions as to caution, and the Turnkey faithfully pledged himself to enforce them on the Prisoner.

"I will come again this evening," said the Priest, "and you can tell me what he says; for, as he has no friend but myself, I must not forsake him."

As Cahill gained the street, a heavy travelling-carriage, whose lumbering build bespoke a foreign origin, passed by with four posters, and sweeping across the Market-place, drew up at the chief Inn of the town. The Priest, in idle curiosity, mingled with the lounging crowd that immediately gathered around the strange-looking equipage, where appliances for strength and comfort seemed blended, in total disregard to all facilities for motion. A bustling Courier, with all the officiousness of his craft, speedily opened the door and banged down the steps, and a very tall old man, in what appeared to be an undress military frock, descended, and then assisted a young lady to alight. This done, they both gave their arms to a young man, whose wasted form and uncertain step bespoke long and severe illness. Supporting him at either side, they assisted him up the steps and into the hall, while the bystanders amused themselves in criticising the foreigners, for such their look and dress declared them.

"The ould fellow with the white beard over his lip is a Roosian or a Proosian," cried one, who aspired to no small skill in continental nationalities.

"Faix! the daughter takes the shine out of them all," cried another. "She's a fine crayture!"

"The brother was a handsome man before he had that sickness!" observed a third. "'Tis no use of his legs he has!"

These frank commentaries on the new arrivals were suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the old man on the steps of the hall-door, where he stood gazing down the street, and totally unconscious of the notice he was attracting.

"What's the building yonder?" cried he, to the waiter at his side, and

They return to the Guid Country.

his accent, as he spoke, betrayed a foreign tongue. "The Town-Hall! —ah, to be sure, I remember it now; and, if I be not much mistaken, there is, at least there was, an old rickety stair to a great loft overhead, where a strange fellow lived, who made masks for the theatre—what's this his name was?" The bystanders listened to these reminiscences in silent astonishment, but unable to supply the missing clue to memory. "Are none of you old enough to remember Jack Ruth, the huntsman?" cried he, aloud.

"I have heard my father talk of him," said a middle-aged man, "if it was the same that galloped down the mountain of Corrig O'Neal and swam the river at the foot of it."

"The very man," broke in the stranger. "Two of the dogs, but not a man, dared to follow! I have seen some bold feats since that day, but I scarcely think I have ever witnessed a more dashing exploit. If old Jack has left any of his name and race behind him," said he, turning to the waiter, "say that there's one here would like to see him;" and with this, he re-entered the inn.

"Who is this gentleman that knows the country so well?" asked the Priest.

"Count Dalton von Auersberg, Sir," replied the Courier. "His whole thoughts are about Ireland now, though I believe he has not been here for upwards of sixty years."

"Dalton!" muttered the Priest to himself, "what can have brought them to Ireland! D'Esmonde must be told of this at once!" And he pushed through the crowd and hastened back to the little Inn.

The Abbé was engaged in writing as Cahill entered the room.

"Have you seen him, Michel?" cried he, eagerly, as he raised his head from the table.

"No. Admission is strictly denied——"

"I thought it would be so—I suspected what the game would be. This Grounsell means to turn the tables, and practise upon *us* the menace that was meant for *him*. I foresee all that he intends, but I'll foil him! I have written here to Wallace, the Queen's Counsel, to come down here at once. This charge against old Dalton, in hands like his, may become a most formidable accusation."

"I have not told you that these Daltons have arrived here——"

"What! Of whom do you speak?"

"The old Count von Dalton, with a niece and nephew."

D'Esmonde sprung from his seat, and for some seconds stood still and silent.

"This is certain, Michel? You know this to be true?"

"I saw the old General myself, and heard him talk with the waiter."

"The combat will, then, be a close one," muttered D'Esmonde. "Grounsell has done this, and it shall cost them dearly. Mark me, Michel—all that the rack and the thumb-screw were to our ancestors, the system of a modern trial realises, in our day. There never was a torture, the invention of man's cruelty, as terrible as cross-examination! I care not that this Dalton should have been as innocent as you are of this crime—it matters little if his guiltlessness appear from the very outset. Give me but two days of searching inquiry into his life, his habits, and his ways. Let me follow him to his fireside, in his poverty, and lay bare all the little straits and contrivances by which he eked out existence, and maintained a fair exterior. Let me show them to the world, as I can show them, with penury, within, and pretension, without. These disclosures cannot be suppressed as irrelevant—they are the alleged motives of the crime. The family that sacrifices a child to a hateful alliance—that sells to Austrian bondage the blood of an only son—and consigns to menial labour a maimed and sickly girl, might well have gone a step further in crime."

"D'Esmonde! D'Esmonde!" cried the other, as he pressed him down into a seat, and took his hand between his own; "these are not words of calm reason, but the outpourings of passion." The Abbé made no answer, but his chest heaved and fell, and his breath came with a rushing sound, while his eyes glared like the orbs of a wild animal.

"You are right, Michel," said he, at last, with a faint sigh. "This was a paroxysm of that hate, which, stronger than all my reason, has actuated me through life. Again and again have I told you, that towards these Daltons I bear a kind of instinctive aversion. These antipathies are not to be combated—there are brave men who will shudder if they see a spider. I have seen a courageous spirit quail before a worm. These are not caprices, to be laughed at—they are indications full of pregnant meaning, could we but read them aright. How my temples throb—my head seems splitting. Now leave me, Michel, for awhile, and I will try to take some rest."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"A TALK OVER 'BYGONES.'"

It was with a burst of joy that Lady Hester heard the Daltons had arrived. In the wearisome monotony of her daily life, anything to do, anywhere to go, any one to see, would have been esteemed boons of great price; what delight, then, was it to meet those with whom she could converse of "bygone times," and other lands!—"that dear Kate," whom she really liked as well as it was in her nature to love anything, from whom she now anticipated so much of that gossip, technically called "news," and into whose confiding heart she longed to pour out her own private woes!

The meeting was indeed affectionate on both sides; and, as Lady Hester was in her most gracious of moods, Frank thought her the very type of amiability, and the old Count pronounced her manners fit for the high ordeal of Vienna itself. Perhaps our reader will be grateful if we leave to his imagination all the changeful moods of grief and joy, surprise, regret, and ecstasy, with which her Ladyship questioned and listened to Kate Dalton's stories; throwing out, from time to time, little reflections of her own, as though incidentally to show how much wiser years had made her. There are people who ever regard the misfortunes of others as mere key-notes to elicit their own sufferings; and thus, when Kate spoke of Russia, Lady Hester quoted Ireland. Frank's sufferings reminded her of her own "nerves;" and poor Nelly's unknown fate was precisely "the condition of obscurity to which Sir Stafford's cruel will had consigned herself."

Kate's mind was very far from being at ease, and yet it was with no mean pleasure she found herself seated beside Lady Hester, talking over the past with all that varying emotion which themes of pleasure and sadness call up. Who has not enjoyed the delight of such moments, when, living again bygone days, we laugh or sigh over incidents wherein once as actors we had moved and felt? If time has dimmed our perceptions of pleasure, it has also softened down resentments and allayed asperities. We can afford to forgive so much, and we feel, also, so confident of others' forgiveness, and if regrets do steal over us, that these things have passed away for ever, there yet lurks the flattering thought that we have grown wiser than we then were! So is it the autobiographies of the fireside are pleasant histories, whose vanities are all pardonable, and whose trifling is never ungraceful! Memory throws such a softened

light on the picture, that even Bores become sufferable, and we extract a passing laugh from the most tiresome of our quondam "Afflictives."

Had her Ladyship been less occupied with herself and her own emotions, she could not have failed to notice the agitation under which Kate suffered at many of her chance remarks. The levity, too, with which she discussed her betrothal to Midchikoff, almost offended her. The truth was, Kate had half forgotten the reckless, unthinking style of her friend's conversation, and it required a little practice and training to grow accustomed to it again.

"Yes, my dear," she went on, "I have had such trouble to persuade people that it was no marriage at all, but a kind of engagement; and when that horrid Emperor wouldn't give his consent, of course there was an end of it. You may be sure, my sweet child, I never believed one syllable of that vile creature's story about George's picture; but somehow, it has got abroad, and that odious Heidendorf goes about repeating it everywhere. I knew well that you never cared for poor dear George! Indeed, I told him as much when he was quite full of admiration for you. It is so stupid in men—their vanity makes them always believe that if they persist, just persevere in their attachment, that the woman will at last succumb. Now, we have a better sense of these things, and actually adore the man that shows indifference to us—at least, I am sure that I do. Such letters as the poor boy keeps writing about you! And about five months ago, when he was so badly wounded, and did not expect to recover, he actually made his will, and left you all he had in the world. Oh, dear!" said she, with a heavy sigh, "they have generous moments, these men, but they never last; and, by the way, I must ask your advice—though I already guess what it will be—about a certain friend of ours, who has had what I really must call the presumption—for after all, Kate, I think you'll agree with me it is a very great presumption—is it not, dear?"

"Until you tell me a little more," replied Kate, with a sigh, "I can scarcely answer."

"Well, it's Mr. Jekyl. You remember that little man that used to be so useful at Florence,—not but he has very pretty manners, and a great deal of tact in society. His letters, too, are inimitably droll. I'll show you some of them."

"Oh! then you are in correspondence with him?" said Kate, slily.

"Yes; that is, he writes to *me*—and I—I sometimes send *him* a short note. In fact, it was the Abbé D'Esmonde induced me to think of it at all; and I was bored here, and so unhappy, and so lonely."

"I perceive," said Kate; "but I trust that there is nothing positive—nothing like an engagement?"

"And why, dear?—whence these cautious scruples?" said Lady Hester, almost peevishly.

"Simply because he is very unworthy of you," said Kate, bluntly, and blushing deep at her own hardihood.

"Oh, I'm quite sure of that," said Lady Hester, casting down her eyes. "I know—I feel that I am mistaken and misunderstood. The world has always judged me unfairly! You alone, dearest, ever comprehended me; and even you could not guess of what I am capable! If you were to read my journal—if you were just to see what sufferings I have gone through; and then that terrible shock, though, I must say, D'Esmonde's mode of communicating it was delicacy itself. A very strange man that Abbé is, Kate. He now and then talks in a way that makes one suspect his affections are or have been engaged."

"I always believed him too deeply immersed in other cares——"

"Oh, what a short-sighted judgment, child! These are the minds that always feel most! I know this, by myself! during the last two years especially! When I think what I have gone through! The fate, not alone of Italy, but of Europe, of the world, I may say, discussed and determined at our fireside! Yes, Kate, I assure you, so it was. D'Esmonde referred many points to me, saying, 'that the keener perception of a female mind must be our pilot here.' Of course, I felt all the responsibility; but never, never was I agitated. How often have I held the destiny of the Imperial House in my hands! How little do they suspect what they owe to my forbearance. But these are not themes to interest you, dearest, and, of course, your prejudices are all Austrian. I must say, Kate, 'the uncle' is charming! Just that kind of dear old creature, so graceful for a young woman to lean upon; and I love his long white moustache! His French, too, is admirable—that Madame de Sevigné turn of expression, so unlike modern flippancy, and so respectful to women!"

"I hope you like Frank!" said Kate, with artless eagerness in her look.

"He's wonderfully good looking, without seeming to know it; but, of course, one cannot expect that to last, Kate."

"Oh! you cannot think how handsome he was before this illness; and then, he is so gentle and affectionate."

"There—there, child, you must not make me fall in love with him, for you know all my sympathies are Italian; and, having embroidered that beautiful banner for the 'Legion of Hope'—pretty name, is it not? —I never could tolerate the 'Barbari.'"

"Pray, do not call them such to my uncle," said Kate, smiling.

"Never fear, dearest. I'm in the habit of meeting all kinds of horrid

people without ever offending a prejudice; and, besides, I am bent on making a conquest of 'Mon Oncle;' he is precisely the species of adorer I like best. I hope he does not take snuff?"

Kate laughed, as she shook her head, in sign of negative.

From this Lady Hester diverged to all manner of reflections about the future—as to whether she ought or ought not to know Midchikoff when she met him; if the Villa of La Rocca were really Kate's, or hers, or the property of somebody else; who was Jekyl's father, or if he ever had such an appendage; in what part of the Tyrol Nelly was then sojourning; was it possible that she was married to the Dwarf, and ashamed to confess it?—and a vast variety of similar speculations, equally marked by a bold indifference as to probability, and a total disregard to the feelings of her companion. Kate was, then, far from displeased when a messenger came to say that the General was alone in the drawing-room, and would esteem it a favour if the ladies would join him.

"How do you mean, alone?" asked Lady Hester. "Where is Mr. Dalton?"

"Dr. Grounsell came for him, my Lady, and took him away in a carriage."

"Poor Frank, he is quite unequal to such fatigue," exclaimed Kate.

"It is like that horrid Doctor. His cruelties to me have been something incredible, at the same time there's not a creature on my estate he does not sympathise with! You'll see how it will be, dearest; he'll take your dear brother somewhere where there's a fever, or perhaps the plague, for I believe they have it here; and in his delicate state, he's sure to catch it and die! Mark my words, dearest Kate, and see if they'll not come true." And, with this reassuring speech, she slipped her arm within her companion's and moved out of the room.

It may be conjectured that it was not without weighty reasons Grounsell induced Frank, weary and exhausted as he was, to leave his home and accompany him on a cold and dreary night to the city gaol. Although declining to enter upon the question before a third party, no sooner were they alone together than the Doctor proceeded to an explanation. Meekins, who it appeared showed the greatest indifference at first, had, as the day wore on, grown restless and impatient. This irritability was increased by the want of his accustomed stimulant of drink in which latterly he had indulged freely, and it was in such a mood he asked for pen and paper, and wrote a few lines to request that young Mr. Dalton would visit him. Grounsell, who made a point to watch the Prisoner from hour to hour, no sooner heard of this, than he hastened off to the Inn with the intelligence.

"There is not a moment to be lost," said he. "This fellow, from al

that I can learn, is but the tool of others, who are bent on bringing before the world the whole story of this terrible crime. A Priest, named Cahill, and who for some time back has been loitering about the neighbourhood, was at the Gaol this morning before daybreak. Later on, he posted a letter for Dublin, the address of which I was enabled to see. It was to the eminent lawyer in criminal cases, Mr. Wallace.

"That some great attack is in preparation, I have, then, no doubt; the only question is, whether the object be to extort money by threats of publicity, or is there some deep feeling of revenge against your name and family?

"The Gaoler, who is in my interest, gives me the most accurate detail of the prisoner's conduct, and, although I am fully prepared to expect every species of duplicity and deceit from a fellow of this stamp, yet it is not impossible that, seeing himself to a certain extent in our power, he may be disposed to desert to our ranks.

"He asks you to come alone, and of course you must comply. Whatever be the subject of his revelations, be most guarded in the way you receive them. Avow utter ignorance of everything, and give him reason to suppose that your great object here is, to prevent the exposure and disgrace of a public trial. This may make him demand higher terms; but at the same time he will be thrown upon fuller explanations to warrant them. In fact, you must temper your manner between a conscious power over the fellow, and an amicable desire to treat with him.

"He has heard, within the last half hour, that he has been recognised here by a former acquaintance, whose account of him includes many circumstance of deep suspicion. It may have been this fact has induced him to write to you. This you will easily discover in his manner. But here we are at the gates, and once more, I say, be cautious and guarded in everything."

"Well, Mr. Gray," said Grounsell to the Gaoler, "you see we have not delayed very long. Ill as he is, Mr. Dalton has accepted this invitation."

"And he has done well, Sir," replied the Gaoler. "The man's bearing is greatly changed since morning: some panic has evidently seized him. There's no saying how long this temper may last; but you are quite right to profit by it, while there is yet time."

"Is he low and depressed, then?"

"Terribly so, Sir. He asked a while ago if any one had called to see him. Of course we guessed whom he meant, and said that a Priest had been at the Gaol that morning, but only to learn the charge under which

he was apprehended. He was much mo
Priest neither expressed a wish to see or s
Grounsell gave a significant glance tow
the Gaoler to the Prisoner's cell.

"He's crying, Sir; don't you hear hi
Frank, as they stood outside the door.
favourable moment." And, thus saying,
keys, in order to give the Prisoner toke
throwing open the door, called out, "H
for, Meekins; see that you don't keep hi
is not very well."

Frank had but time to reach the little
when the door was closed, and he was alo

CHAPTER X

"THE GAOL

FRANK DALTON was in nowise prepar
possession with which Meekins, after as
his note, took a seat in front of him. S
glossy black hair with his hand, he seeme
conversation; and, while there was noth
there was an assured calmness, far mo
nervous invalid.

"You wished to see me, Meekins," sai
do for you?"

The man bent slightly forward on hi
penetrating eyes, continued steadily to st

"You're too young and too generous
he, after a long pause, in which it seeme
other's nature; "and before we say any
Did any one advise you to come here to-

"Yes," said Frank, boldly.

"It was that Doctor—the man they c

"Yes," replied the youth, in the same

"Now, what has he against *me*?—wh

"I know nothing about it," said Fra
only to consist in an examination of r
better."

"Don't you see what I'm at, Sir?—don't you perceive that I only want to know your Honour's feeling towards me, and whether what I'm to say is to be laid up in your heart, or taken down in writing, and made into an indictment?"

"My feeling towards you is easily told. If you be an honest man, and have any need of me, I'll stand by you; if you be not an honest man, but the dishonesty only affects myself and my interests, show me anything that can warrant it, and I'm ready to forgive you."

The Prisoner hung down his head, and for some minutes seemed deeply immersed in reflection.

"Mr. Dalton," said he, drawing his chair nearer to the bed, "I'll make this business very short, and we needn't be wasting our time talking over what is honesty, and what is roguery—things every man has his own notions about, and that depends far more upon what he has in his pocket than what he feels in his heart. I can do *you* a good turn, *you* can do *me* another. The service I can render you will make you a rich man, and put you at the head of your family, where you ought to be. All I ask in return is, a free discharge from this Gaol, and money enough to go to America. There never was a better bargain for you! As for myself, I could make more of my secret if I liked—more, both in money—and—and—in other ways."

As he said these last few words, his cheek grew scarlet, and his eyes seemed to glisten.

"I scarcely understand you," said Frank. "Do you mean——"

"I'll tell you what I mean, and so plainly, that you can't mistake me. I'll make you what you have good right to be—the 'Dalton of Corrig O'Neal,' the ould place, that was in your mother's family for hundreds of years back. It isn't taking service in a foreign land you need be, but an Irish Gentleman, living on his own lawful estate."

"And for this you ask——"

"Just what I told you—an open door and two hundred pounds down," said the fellow, with a rough boldness that was close on insolence. "I've told you already, that if I only wanted a good bargain, there's others would give more—but that's not what I'm looking for. I'm an old man," added he, in a softened voice, "and who knows when I may be called away to the long account!" Then suddenly, as it were correcting himself for a weak admission, he went on more firmly: "That's neither here nor there; the matter is just this: Will you pay the trifle I ask, for three thousand a year, if it isn't more?"

"I must first of all consult with some friend——"

"There! that's enough. You've said it now! Mr. Dalton, I've done with you for ever," said the fellow, rising, and walking to the window.

"[illegible]" said Frank, calmly. "It may be that [illegible] it may be that by such a bar- [illegible] of the law, not to vindi- [illegible] an expiation for a dreadful [illegible]"

"[illegible] the fellow, with the same sternness as [illegible] I've done with you for ever. The [illegible] of Corrig O'Neal—as [illegible] by the great——"

"[illegible] You have either told me [illegible] passion hurry you [illegible]"

"[illegible] the other, turning fiercely round, [illegible] with a look of menace. "What [illegible]"

"[illegible]" said Frank, rising slowly from [illegible] from protracting it [illegible]"

"[illegible] Mr. [illegible]," said Meekins, with a [illegible] against the door of the cell. "You [illegible] joking all the while. Sure [illegible] except what another man [illegible] property for you. I'm a [illegible]"—here his voice trembled and [illegible] of this life I am at all, but [illegible]"

"[illegible]" said Frank, calmly.

"[illegible] hinder you," said the other, but still [illegible] "You said a while ago, that I told you [illegible] that means before you go?"

"[illegible]" said Frank, sternly.

"[illegible] Don't think you're back with your [illegible] where a man can be flogged to death for a [illegible] though I am in prison. Maybe, if you pro- [illegible] more than your equal!" There was a [illegible] that could not be mistaken, and [illegible] his hand to his breast; but, quick as was the ges- [illegible] for him, and caught his arm before he [illegible] at this critical moment the key was heard to [illegible] and the heavy door was slowly opened. "There, take [illegible]" said Meekins, slipping his hand beneath Frank's. "You're [illegible] to walk alone."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"A FENCING MATCH."

"You came in time—in the very nick, Mr. Gray," said Frank, with a quiet smile. "My friend here and I had said all that we had to say to each other."

"Maybe you'd come again—maybe you'd give me five minutes another time?" whispered Meekins, submissively, in Frank's ear.

"I think not," said Frank, with an easy significance in his look; "perhaps, on reflection, you'll find that I have come once too often!" And with these words he left the cell, and, in silent meditation, returned to his companion.

"The fellow's voice was loud and menacing when I came to the door," said Gray, as they walked along.

"Yes, he grew excited just at that moment; he is evidently a passionate man," was Frank's reply; and he relapsed into his former reserve.

Grounsell, who at first waited with most exemplary patience for Frank to narrate the substance of his interview, at last grew weary of his reserve, and asked him what had occurred between them.

Frank paid no attention to the question, but sat with his head resting on his hand, and evidently deep in thought. At last he said, slowly,

"Can you tell me the exact date of Mr. Godfrey's murder?"

"To the day—almost to the hour," replied Grounsell. Taking out his pocket-book, he read, "It was on a Friday, the 11th of November, in the year 18—"

"Great God!" cried Frank, grasping the other's arm, while his whole frame shook with a strong convulsion. "Was it, then, on that night?"

"Yes," said the other, "the murder took place at night. The body, when discovered the next morning, was perfectly cold."

"Then that was it!" cried Frank, wildly. "It was then—when the light was put out—when he crossed the garden—when he opened the wicket——" A burst of hysteric laughter broke from him, and muttering, "I saw it—I saw it all," he fell back fainting into Grounsell's arms.

All the doctor's care and judicious treatment were insufficient to recal the youth to himself. His nervous system, shattered and broken by long illness, was evidently unequal to the burden of the emotions he was suf-

fering under, and before he reached the hotel his mind was wandering away in all the incoherency of actual madness.

Next to the unhappy youth himself, Grounsell's case was the most pitiable. Unable to account for the terrible consequences of the scene whose events were a secret to himself, he felt all the responsibility of a calamity he had been instrumental in producing. From Frank it was utterly hopeless to look for any explanation; already his brain was filled with wild images of war and battle, mingled with broken memories of a scene which none around his bed could recognise. In his distraction Grounsell hurried to the Gaol, to see and interrogate Meekins. Agitated and distracted as he was, all his prudent reserve and calm forethought were completely forgotten. He saw himself the cause of a dreadful affliction, and already cursed in his heart the wiles and snares in which he was engaged. "If this boy's reason be lost for ever, I, and I only, am in fault," he went on repeating as he drove in mad haste back to the Prison.

In a few and scarcely coherent words he explained to Gray his wish to see the prisoner, and although apprised that he had already gone to rest, he persisted strongly, and was at length admitted into his cell.

Meekins started at the sound of the opening door, and called out, gruffly, "Who's there?"

"It's your friend," said Grounsell, who had already determined on any sacrifice of his policy which should give him the hope of aiding Frank.

"My friend!" said Meekins, with a dry laugh. "Since when, Sir?"

"Since I have begun to believe I may have wronged you, Meekins," said Grounsell, seating himself at the bedside.

"I see, Sir," rejoined the other, slowly; "I see it all. Mr. Dalton has told you what passed between us, and you are wiser than he was."

"He has not told me everything, Meekins—at least, not so fully and clearly as I wish. I want you, therefore, to go over it all again for me, omitting nothing that was said on either side."

"Aye," said the prisoner, drily, "I see. Now, what did Mr. Dalton say to you? I'm curious to know—I'd like to hear how he spoke of me."

"As of one who was well disposed to serve him, Meekins," said Grounsell, hesitatingly, and in some confusion.

"Yes, to be sure," said the fellow, with a keen glance beneath his gathering brows. "And he told you, too, that we parted good friends—at least, as much so as a poor man like myself could be to a born gentleman like him."

"That he did," cried Grounsell, eagerly; "and young Mr. Dalton

is not the man to think the worse of your friendship, because you are not his equal in rank."

"I see—I believe I see it all," said Meekins, with the same sententious slowness as before. "Now look, Doctor," added he, fixing a cold and steady stare on the other's features, "it is late in the night—not far from twelve o'clock—and I ask you, wouldn't it be better for you to be asleep in your bed, and leave me to rest quietly in mine, rather than be fencing—aye, fencing here—with one another, trying who is the deepest? Just answer me that, Sir."

"You want to offend me," said Grounsell, rising.

"No, Sir; but it would be offending yourself, to suppose that it was worth your while to deceive the like of *me*—a poor, helpless man, without a friend in the world."

"I own I don't understand you, Meekins," said Grounsell, reseating himself.

"There's nothing so easy, Sir, if you want to do it. If Mr. Dalton told you what passed between us to-night, you know what advice you gave him; and if he did not tell you, faix! neither will I—that's all. *He* knows what I have in my power. He was fool enough not to take me at my word. Maybe I wouldn't be in the same mind again."

"Come, come," said Grounsell, good-humouredly, "this is not spoken like yourself. It can be no object with you to injure a young gentleman who never harmed you; and if, in serving him, you can serve yourself, the part will be both more sensible and more honourable."

"Well, then," said Meekins, calmly, "I *can* serve him; and now comes the other question, 'What will he do for *me?*'"

"What do you require from him?"

"To leave this place at once—before morning," said the other, earnestly. "I don't want to see them that might make me change my mind; to be on board of a ship at Waterford, and away out of Ireland for ever, with three hundred pounds—I said two, but I'll want three—and for that—for that"—here he hesitated some seconds—"for that I'll do what I promised."

"And this business will never be spoken of more."

"Eh! what?" cried Meekins, starting.

"I mean that when your terms are complied with, what security have we that you'll not disclose this secret hereafter?"

Meekins slowly repeated the other's words twice over to himself, as if to weigh every syllable of them, and then a sudden flashing of his dark eyes showed that he had caught what he suspected was their meaning.

"Exactly so; I was coming to that," cried he. "We'll take an oath on the Gospel—Mr. Frank Dalton and myself—that never, while there's breath in our bodies, will we ever speak to man or mortal about this matter. I know a born gentleman wouldn't perjure himself, and, as for me, I'll swear in any way, and before any one, that your two selves appoint."

"Then there's this Priest," said Grounsell, doubtingly. "You have already told him a great deal about this business."

"If he hasn't me to the fore, to prove what I said, *he* can do nothing; and as to the Will, he never heard of it."

"The Will!" exclaimed Grounsell, with an involuntary burst of surprise; and, brief as it was, it yet revealed a whole world of dissimulation to the acute mind of the Prisoner.

"So, Doctor," said the fellow, slowly, "I was right after all. You *were* only fencing with me."

"What do you mean?" cried Grounsell.

"I mean just this, that young Dalton never told you one word that passed between us—that you came here to pump me, and find out all I knew—that, 'cute as you are, there's them that's equal to you, and that you'll go back as wise as you came."

"What's the meaning of this change, Meekins?"

"It well becomes you, a Gentleman, and a Justice of the Peace, to come to the cell of a Prisoner in the dead of the night, and try to worm out of him what you want for evidence. Won't it be a fine thing to tell before a Jury the offers you made me this night. Now, mind me, Doctor, and pay attention to my words. This is twice you tried to trick me, for it was you sent that young man here. We've done with each other now; and may the flesh rot off my bones, like a bit of burnt leather, if I ever trust you again!"

There was an insolent defiance in the way these words were uttered, that told Grounsell all hope of negotiation was gone; and the unhappy Doctor sat overwhelmed by the weight of his own incapacity and unskilfulness.

"There now, Sir, leave me alone. To-morrow I'll find out if a man is to be treated in this way. If I'm not discharged out of this Gaol before nine o'clock, *I'll* know why, and *you'll* never forget it, the longest day you live."

Crestfallen and dispirited, Grounsell retired from the cell and returned to the Inn.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"A STEP IN VAIN."

GROUNSELL lost no time in summoning to his aid Mr. Hipsley, one of the leading members of the Irish Bar; but while he awaited his coming, difficulties gathered around him from every side. Lenahan, the old farmer, who was at first so positive about the identity of the Prisoner, began to express some doubts and hesitations on the subject. "It was so many years back since he had seen him, that it was possible he might be mistaken;" and in fact, he laid far more stress on the fashion of a certain fustian jacket that the man used to wear, than on any marks and signs of personal resemblance.

The bold defiance of Meekins, and his insolent threats to expose the Daltons to the world, assailed the poor Doctor in various ways, and although far from feeling insensible to the shame of figuring on a trial, as having terrorised over a Prisoner, the greater ruin that impended on his friends absorbed all his sorrows.

Had he been the evil genius of the family, he could scarcely have attained a greater degree of unpopularity. Frank's illness—for since the night at the Gaol his mind had not ceased to wander—was, in Kate's estimation, solely attributable to Grounsell's interference—all the more unpardonable because inexplicable. Lady Hester regarded him as the disturber of all social relations, who, for some private ends, was involving everybody in lawsuits, and the old Count had most natural misgivings about a man who, having assumed the sole direction of a delicate affair, now confessed himself utterly unable to see the way before him.

To such an extent had mortification and defeat reduced the unhappy Doctor, that when Hipsley arrived he was quite unable to give anything like a coherent statement of the case, or lay before the astute lawyer the points whereon he desired guidance and direction. Meanwhile, the enemy were in a state of active and most menacing preparation. Meekins, discharged from Gaol, was living at an Inn in the town, surrounded by a strong staff of barristers, whose rank and standing plainly showed that abundant pecuniary resources supplied every agency of battle.

Numerous witnesses were said to have been summoned to give their evidence, and the rumour ran, that the most ardent votary of private scandal would be satiated with the tales and traits of domestic life the investigation would expose to the world.

Hipsley, who with practised tact soon saw the game about to be played, in vain asked Grounsell for some explanation of its meaning. There was a degree of malignity in all the proceedings which could only be accounted for on the supposition of a long-nourished revenge. How was he to understand this? Alas! poor Grounsell knew nothing, and remembered nothing. Stray fragments of conversation, and scattered passages of by-gone scenes, were jumbled up incoherently in his brain, and it was easy to perceive that a very little was wanting to reduce his mind to the helpless condition of Frank Dalton's.

The charge of a conspiracy to murder his relative brought against a gentleman of fortune and position, was an accusation well calculated to excite the most painful feelings of public curiosity, and such was now openly avowed to be the allegation about to be brought to issue; and however repugnant to credulity the bare assertion might appear at first, the rumour was artfully associated with a strong array of threatening circumstances. Every trivial coldness or misunderstanding between Dalton and his brother-in-law Godfrey were now remembered and revived. All the harsh phrases, by which old Peter used to speak of the other's character and conduct—Dalton's constant use of the expression, "What's the use of his money—will he ever enjoy it?"—was now cited as but too significant of a dreadful purpose; and, in a word, the public, with a casuistry which we often see, was rather pleased to credit, what it flattered its own ingenuity to combine and arrange. Dalton was well known to have been a passionate, headstrong man—violent in his resentments, although ready to forgive and forget injuries the moment after. This temper, and his departure for the Continent, from which he never returned, were all the substantial facts on which the whole superstructure was raised.

If Hipsley saw that the array of evidence was far from bringing guilt home to Dalton, he also perceived that the exposure alone would be a terrible blow to the suffering family. The very nature of the attack evinced a deep and hidden vengeance. To avert this dreadful infliction seemed then his first duty, and he endeavoured by every means in his power to ascertain who was the great instigator of the proceeding, in which it was easy to see Meekins was but a subordinate. The name of Father Cahill had twice or thrice been mentioned by Grounsell, but with a vagueness of which little advantage could be taken. Still, even with so faint a clue, Hipsley was fain to be content, and after several days' ineffectual search, he at last discovered that this Priest, in company with another, was residing at the little Inn of the Rore.

Having communicated his plan to the old General, who but half assented to the idea of negotiating with the enemy, Hipsley set out for

the Rore, after a long day of fatiguing labour. "An inaccurate and insufficient indictment," repeated the lawyer to himself, "the old and hackneyed resource to baulk the prurient curiosity of the public, and cut off the scent, when the gossiping pack are in full cry—this is all that we have now left to us. We must go into Court: the only thing is to leave it as soon as we are able."

It was not till he was within half a mile of the little Inn, that Hipsley saw all the difficulty of what he was engaged in, for in what way, or on what pretext was he to address Cahill in the matter, or by what right connect him with the proceedings? The hardihood by which he had often suggested to a witness what he wanted to elicit, stood his part now, and he boldly passed the threshold, and asked for Father Cahill. Mistaking him for the chief Counsel on the other side, the Landlord bowed obsequiously, and, without further parley, introduced him into the room where D'Esmonde and Cahill were then sitting.

"I see, Gentlemen," said Hipsley, bowing politely to each, "that I am not the person you expected, but may I be permitted to enjoy an advantage which good fortune has given me, and ask of you a few moments' conversation. I am the Counsel engaged by Mr. Dalton, in the case which on Tuesday next is to be brought to trial, and having learned from Dr. Grounsell that I might communicate with you in all freedom and candour, I have come to see if something cannot be done to rescue the honour of a family from the shame of publicity, and the obloquy that attends the exposure of a Criminal Court."

D'Esmonde took up a book as Hipsley began this address, and affected to be too deeply engaged in his reading to pay the least attention to what went forward, while Cahill remained standing, as if to intimate to the stranger the propriety of a very brief interruption.

"You must have mistaken the person you are addressing, Sir," said the Priest, calmly. "My name is Cahill."

"Precisely, Sir; and to the Reverend Mr. Cahill I desire to speak. It is about ten days or a fortnight since, you called on Dr. Grounsell with a proposition for the settlement of this affair. I am not sufficiently conversant with the details of what passed to say on which side the obstacle stood, whether *he* was indisposed to concede enough, or that *you* demanded too much. I only know that the negotiation was abortive, and it is now with the hope of resuming the discussion——"

"Too late, Sir—too late," said the Priest, peremptorily, while a very slight but decisive motion of D'Esmonde's brows gave him encouragement to be bold. "I did, it is true, take the step you allude to; a variety of considerations had their influence over me. I felt interested about the poor man, Meekins, and was naturally anxious to screen, from

the consequences of shame, a very old and honoured family of the country, and——" Here he hesitated, for a warning glance from the Abbé recalled him to caution.

"And you were about to allude to that more delicate part of the affair which relates to Mr. Godfrey's son, Sir?" interposed Hipsley, while by an unmistakable gesture, he showed his consciousness of D'Esmonde's presence.

"I find, Sir," said Cahill, coldly, "that we are gradually involving ourselves in the very discussion I have already declined to engage in. It is not here, nor by us, this cause must be determined. It would be hard to persuade me that you should even counsel an interference with the course of public justice."

"You are quite right, Sir, in your estimate of me," said Hipsley, bowing; "nor should I do so, if I saw anything in this case but needless exposure and great cruelty towards those who must necessarily be guiltless, without one single good end obtained, except you could so deem the gratification of public scandal, by the harrowing tale of family misfortune. Bear me with one moment more," said he, as a gesture of impatience from Cahill showed that he wished an end of the interview. "I will concede what I have no right to concede, and what I am in a position to refute thoroughly—the guilt of the party implicated; upon whom will the punishment fall? on the aged uncle, a brave and honoured soldier, without the shadow of stain on his fair fame—on a young and beautiful girl, whose life has already compassed more real sorrow that old men like myself have ever known in all their career—and on a youth, now stretched upon his sick bed, and for whom humanity would rather wish death itself, than to come back into a world he must shrink from with shame."

"'Filius peccatoris exardebit in crimine Patris'—The son of the sinful man shall burn out in his father's shame!" said D'Esmonde, reading aloud from the volume in his hand.

Hipsley almost started at the solemnity with which these awful words were uttered, and stood for a sew seconds gazing on the pale and thoughtful face which was still bent over the book.

"My mission has then failed!" said the Lawyer, regretfully. "I am sorry it should be so."

A cold bow was the only reply Cahill returned to this speech, and the other slowly withdrew, and took his way back to Kilkenny, the solemn and terrible denunciation still ringing in his ears as he went.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"THE COURT-HOUSE OF KILKENNY."

THE character of crime in Ireland has preserved for some years back a most terrible consistency. The story of every murder is the same. The same secret vengeance; the same imputed wrong; the same dreadful sentence issued from a dark and bloody tribunal; the victim alone is changed, but all the rest is unaltered; and we read, over and over again, of the last agonies on the high road and in the noon-day, till, sated and wearied, we grow into a terrible indifference as to guilt, and talk of the "Wild Justice of the People" as though amongst the natural causes which shorten human life. If this be so, and to its truth we call to witness those who, in every neighbourhood, have seen some fearful event—happening, as it were, at their very doors—deplored to-day, almost forgotten to-morrow; and while such is the case, the public mind is painfully sensitive as to the details of any guilt attended with new and unaccustomed agencies. In fact, with all the terrible catalogue before us, we should be far from inferring a great degree of guiltiness to a people in whom we see infinitely more of misguided energies and depraved passions, than of that nature whose sordid incentives to crime constitute the bad of other countries. We are not, in this, the apologist for murder. God forbid that we should ever be supposed to palliate, by even a word, those brutal assassinations which make every man blush to call himself an Irishman! We would only be understood as saying that these crimes, dark, fearful, and frequent as they are, do not argue the same hopeless debasement of our population as the less organised guilt of other countries; and inasmuch as the vengeance even of the Savage is a nobler instinct than the highwayman's passion for gain, so we cherish a hope that the time is not distant when the peasant shall tear out of his heart the damnable delusion of vindication by blood—when he will learn a manly fortitude under calamity, a generous trust in those above him, and, better again, a freeman consciousness that the Law will vindicate him against injury, and that we live in an age when the great are powerless to do wrong, unless when their inhumanity be screened behind the darker shadow of the murder that avenges it! Then, indeed, we have no sympathy for all the sufferings of want, or all the miseries of fever; then, we forget the dreary hovel, the famished children, the palsy of age, and the hopeless cry of starving

[illegible] for the sights and sounds [illegible]

[illegible] of crime there is no country [illegible] accompanied by new agencies, or [illegible] excite so great and [illegible] involving any one [illegible] upon as almost incredible, [illegible] by the ordinary recurrence of [illegible] in our minds with but one [illegible]

[illegible] thoughts from the remark [illegible] again to the fact, that the [illegible] of the most intense anxiety as the [illegible] poured in from the [illegible] The case had been widely [illegible] with every reserve as regarded [illegible] against old Mr. Dalton had [illegible] contemporaries had died; of the [illegible] sinking into imbecility. [illegible] "Will Peter" as one who would have [illegible] received the impressions [illegible] more lenient, that [illegible] the excesses of the one [illegible] innumerable incidents [illegible] and from the venerable [illegible] Meekins, every character was now [illegible]

[illegible] hundreds of miles, and had offered im- [illegible] to suppress the exposure, was among the com- [illegible] and that the failure of this attempt was [illegible] illness and probable death. Meekins's [illegible] and explanations. Some alleged [illegible] grudge against the family, never to [illegible] was to some incident of the war [illegible] young Dalton; and, lastly, it was [illegible] with the conspiracy, he was [illegible] of the guilt before he took on him the [illegible] whose vows he professed. All these mys- [illegible] circumstances tended to heighten the interest of [illegible] and the City was crowded in every part by strangers, [illegible] the Court-house, but thronged the street in front, and [illegible] the windows and roofs of the opposite houses.

From daylight the seats were taken in the galleries of the Court; the most distinguished of the neighbouring gentry were all gathered there, while in the seats behind the bench were ranged several members of the Peerage, who had travelled long distances to be present. To the left of the presiding Judge sat Count Stephen, calm, stern, and motionless, as if on parade. If many of the ceremonials of the Court and the general aspect of the assemblage were new and strange to his eyes, nothing in his bearing or manner bespoke surprise or astonishment. As little too did he seem aware of the gaze of that crowded assembly, who, until the interest of the trial called their attention away, never ceased to stare steadfastly at him.

At the corner of the gallery facing the jury-box D'Esmonde and Cahill were seated. The Abbé, dressed with peculiar care, and wearing the blue silk collar of an order over his white cravat, was recognised by the crowd beneath as a personage of rank and consideration, which, indeed, his exalted and handsome features appeared well to corroborate. He sustained the strong stare of the assemblage with a calm but haughty self-possession, like one well accustomed to the public eye, and who felt no shrinking from the gaze of a multitude. Already the rumour ran that he was an official, high in the household of the Pope, and many strange conjectures were hazarded on the meaning of his presence at the trial.

To all the buzz of voices, and the swaying, surging motion of a vast crowd, there succeeded a dead silence and tranquillity, when the Judges took their seats on the bench. The ordinary details were all gone through with accustomed formality: the Jury sworn, and the indictment read aloud by the Clerk of the Crown, whose rapid enunciation and monotonous voice took nothing from the novelty of the statement that was yet to be made by Counsel. At length Mr. Wallace rose, and now curiosity was excited to the utmost. In slow and measured phrase he began by bespeaking the patient and careful attention of the Jury to the case before them. He told them that it was a rare event in the annals of criminal law to arraign one who was already gone before the greatest of all tribunals; but that such cases had occurred, and it was deemed of great importance, not alone to the cause of truth and justice, that these investigations should be made, but that a strong moral might be read, in the remarkable train of incidents by which these discoveries were elicited, and men were taught to see the hand of Providence in events, which, to unthinking minds, had seemed purely accidental and fortuitous. After dwelling for some time on this theme, he went on to state the great difficulty and embarrassment of his own position, called upon as he was to arraign less the guilty man than his blameless and innocent

[illegible] of the law on those who had [illegible]

[illegible] of the open shame and disgrace [illegible]—I do not simply allude to [illegible] witness—I speak of the [illegible] of public opinion visits the [illegible] a reproach, and denying [illegible] weighty considerations if the [illegible] important claims, not [illegible] to the world at large, that guilt [illegible] and that the law is inflexible in its [illegible]

[illegible] beginning with an account [illegible] which connected them [illegible] the traits of character [illegible] incompatible one to [illegible] and without exaggeration; [illegible] Peter Dalton, he drew the picture of a [illegible] in the strongest colours, [illegible] with them through [illegible] as explaining and even justifying [illegible] "You will," said he, "perceive [illegible] and even where you con[illegible] of events which [illegible] and degraded by crime what [illegible] From the evidence I shall produce [illegible] between these two [illegible] of character, and although this [illegible] himself from another, we shall [illegible] of all in the consistency of the narrative and [illegible] from other sources. We shall [illegible] demands of Dalton, stimulated by the necessity [illegible] a breach with his brother-in-law, and [illegible] for the Continent; and, lastly, we mean to [illegible] revelation made to the witness [illegible] William Noonan, who, while incriminating [illegible] Dalton as the contriver of the scheme by which the [illegible] was effected.

"It would be manifestly impossible, in a case like this, when from the very outset the greatest secrecy was observed, and over whose mystery years have accumulated clouds of difficulty, to afford that clear and pre-

cise line of evidence, which in a recent event might naturally be looked for. But you will learn enough, and more than enough, to satisfy your minds on every point. Meekins shall be subjected to any cross-examination my learned brother may desire, and I only ask for him so much of your confidence as a plain unvarying statement warrants. He is a stranger in this country; and although it has been rumoured, from his resemblance to a man formerly known here, that he has been recognised, we shall show you that for upwards of thirty years he has been in foreign countries, and while he understands that his parents were originally from the south of Ireland, he believes himself to have been born in America. These facts will at once disabuse your minds of the suspicion that he can have been actuated by any malicious or revengeful feelings towards the Daltons. We shall, also, show that the most strenuous efforts have been made to suppress his testimony; and while it may be painful to exhibit one charged with the administration of justice as having plotted to subvert or distort it, we shall produce on the witness-table the individual who himself made these very overtures of corruption."

A long and minute narrative followed—every step of the conspiracy was detailed—from the first communication of Dalton with Noonan, to the fatal moment of the murder. Noonan's own subsequent confession to Meekins was then related; and lastly, the singular accident by which Meekins came in contact with the Abbé D'Esmonde, and was led to a revelation of the whole occurrence. The Lawyer at last sat down, and as he did so, a low murmuring sound ran through the crowded assemblage, whose mournful cadence bespoke the painful acquiescence in the statement they had heard. More than one eager and sympathising look was turned to where the old Count sat; but his calm, stern features, were passive and immovable as ever; and although he listened with attention to the address of the advocate, not a semblance of emotion could be detected in his manner.

Meekins was now called to the witness-box, and as he made his way through the crowd, and ascended the table, the most intense curiosity to see him was displayed. Well dressed, and with a manner of decent and respectful quietude, he slowly mounted the stairs, and saluted the Bench and the Jury. Although an old man, he was hale and stout-looking, his massive broad forehead, and clear grey eye, showing a character of temperament well able to offer resistance to time.

There was an apparent frankness and simplicity about him that favourably impressed the Court, and he gave his evidence with that blended confidence and caution which never fails to have its effect on a Jury. He owned, too, that he had once speculated on using the secret for his own advantage, and extorting a considerable sum from old

Dalton's fears, but that on second thoughts he had decided on abando ing this notion, and resolved to let the mystery die with him. Tl accidental circumstance of meeting with the Abbé D'Esmonde, Venice, changed the determination, and it was while under the religio teachings of this good Priest that he came to the conviction of his a duty. His evidence occupied several hours, and it was late in the afte noon when the cross-examination began.

Nothing within the reach of a crafty Lawyer was left undone. A that practised skill and penetration could accomplish was exhibited, b the testimony was unshaken in every important point; and save wh pushing the witness as to his own early life and habits, not a sing admission could be extorted to his discredit. But even here his carel easy manner rescued him; and when he alleged that he never ve well knew where he was born, or who were his parents, nor had he a very great misgivings about having served on board a slaver, and "ev worse," the Jury only smiled at what seemed the frank indifference an old sailor. Noonan had given him a few scraps of Mr. Dalto writing. He had lost most of them, he said; but of those whi remained, although unsigned, the authenticity was easily establish Old Peter's handwriting was familiar to many, and several witnes swore to their being genuine. In other respects, they were of lit importance. One alone bore any real significance, and it was the co cluding passage of a letter, and ran thus: "So that if I'm driven to at last. Godfrey himself is more to blame than *me*." Vague as t menacing sentence was, it bore too home upon the allegations of t witness not to produce a strong effect, nor could any dexterity of t Counsel succeed in obliterating its impression.

Seeing that the Counsel for the prosecution had not elicited the te mony he promised, respecting the attempted subornation of Meeki the defence rashly adventured upon that dangerous ground, and late discovered his error, for the witness detailed various conversati between Grounsell and himself, and gave with terrible effect a sc that he swore had occurred between young Dalton and him in the G It was in vain to remind the Jury that he, who alone could refute t evidence, was stretched on a bed of sickness. The effect was alre made.

When questioned as to the reasons Dalton might have had for c spiring against his brother-in-law, he confessed that Noonan only kn that Godfrey had refused him all assistance, and that he believed tl after his death, he, Dalton, would inherit the property. His own i pression was, however, that it was more vengeance than anything el [illegible] were living in great poverty abroad; there was scarcely

privation which they had not experienced; and the embittering stings of their misery were adduced as the mainspring of Old Peter's guilt. This allusion to the private life of the Dalton family was eagerly seized on by Mr. Wallace, who now "begged to ascertain certain facts on a subject, which, but for his learned brother's initiative, he would have shrunk from exhibiting in open Court." Meekins could, of course, but give such details as he had learned from Noonan, but they all described a life of suffering and meanness. Their contrivances, and their straits —their frequent change of place, as debt accumulated over them—their borrowings and their bills—and, lastly, the boastful pretexts they constantly brought forward, on the rank of their Uncle, Count Dalton, as a guarantee of their solvency and respectability. So unexpected was the transition to the mention of this name, that the whole assembly suddenly turned their eyes to where the old General sat, mute and stern; but the look he returned might well have abashed them, so haughty and daring was its insolence.

Apparently to show the knowledge possessed by the witness on matters of private detail—but, in reality, to afford an occasion for dilating on a painful subject—the whole history of the family was raked up, and all the sad story of Nelly's toil, and Kate's menial duties, paraded in open Court, wound up, at last, with what was called, young Frank's enlistment "as a common soldier of the Austrian army."

The greater interests of the trial were all forgotten in these materials for gossip, and the curiosity of the listeners was excited to its highest pitch, when he came to tell of that mingled misery and ambition—that pride of name, and shameless disregard of duty, which he described as characterising them; nor was the craving appetite for scandal half appeased, when the Court interrupted the examination, and declared that it was irrelevant and purposeless.

Meekins at last descended from the table, and Michel Lenahan was called up. The important fact he had so resolutely sworn to, some weeks before, he had already shown a disinclination to confirm, and all that he could now be brought to admit, was, that he had believed Meekins was his old acquaintance, Black Sam; but the years that had elapsed since he saw him before, change of dress, and the effect of time on each of them, might well shake a better memory than his own.

"Jimmy Morris might know him again, my Lord," said he, "for he never forgot anybody—but *he* isn't to the fore."

"I have the happiness to say that he is," said Hipsley. "He has arrived from Cove, here, this morning. Call James Morris, Crier;" and soon after, a very diminutive old man, with a contracted leg, mounted the table. He was speedily sworn, and his examination co

menced. After a few questions as to his trade—he was a tailor—and where he had lived latterly, he was asked whether he remembered, amongst his former acquaintance a certain Bailiff on the Corrig O'Neal estate, commonly called Black Sam?

"By course I do," said he: "he was always making mischief between Mr. Godfrey and Ould Peter."

"You have not been asked that question, Sir," interposed Wallace.

"No, but he shall be, by-and-by," cried Hipsley. "Tell me, now, what kind of a man was this same Black Sam?"

"As cruel a man as ever you seen."

"That is not exactly what I am asking. I want to hear what he was like."

"He was like the greatest villain——"

"I mean, was he short or tall; was he a big man and a strong man, or was he a little fellow, like you or me."

"Devil a bit like either of us. He'd bate us both with one hand—aye, and that fellow there with the wig that's laughing at us, into the bargain."

"So, then, he was large and powerful?"

"Yes, that he was."

"Had he anything remarkable about his appearance—anything that might easily distinguish him from other men?"

"'Tis, maybe, his eyes you mane?"

"What about his eyes, then?"

"They could be lookin' at ye when ye'd sware they were only lookin' at the ground: and he'd a thrick of stopping himself when he was laughing hearty by drawing the back of his hand over his mouth, this way."

As the witness accompanied these words by a gesture, a low murmur of astonishment ran through the Court, for more than once during the morning Meekins had been seen to perform the very act described.

"You would probably be able to know him again if you saw him?"

"That I would."

"Look around you, now, and tell me if you see him here. No, no, he's not in the Jury-box; still less likely is it that you'd find him on the Bench."

The witness, neither heeding the remark nor the laughter which followed it, slowly rose and looked around him.

"Move a little to one side, if ye plase," said he, to a member of the inner bar. "Yes, that's him." And he pointed to Meekins, who, with crossed arms and lowering frown, stood still and immovable.

The bystanders all fell back at the same instant, and now he re-

mained isolated in the midst of that crowded scene, every eye bent upon him.

"You're wearin' well, Sam," said the witness, addressing him familiarly. "Maybe it's the black wig you've on; but you don't look a day oulder than when I seen you last."

This speech excited the most intense astonishment in the Court, and many now perceived, for the first time, that Meekins did not wear his own hair.

"Are you positive, then, that this man is Black Sam?"

"I am."

"Are you prepared to swear to it, on your solemn oath, taking all the consequences false evidence will bring down upon you?"

"I am."

"You are quite certain that it's no accidental resemblance, but that this is the very identical man you knew long ago?"

"I'm certain sure. I'd know him among a thousand, and be the same token: he has the mark of a cut on the crown of his head, three inches long. See, now, if I'm not right."

Meekins was now ordered to mount the witness-table, and remove his wig. He was about to say something, but Wallace stopped him, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"I would beg to observe," said the Lawyer, "that if an old cicatrix is to be the essential token of recognition, few men who have lived the adventurous life of Meekins will escape calumny."

"'Tis a mark lik the letter V," said "Jimmy," "for it was ould Peter himself gave it him, one night with a brass candlestick. "There it is," cried he, triumphantly; "didn't I tell true?"

The crowded galleries creaked under the pressure of the eager spectators, who now bent forward and gazed on this strong proof of identification.

"Is there any other mark by which you could remember him?"

"Sure, I know every fayture of his face—what more d'ye want?"

"Now, when did you see him last—I mean before this day?"

"The last time I seen him was the mornin' he was taken up."

"How do you mean, 'taken up?' "

"Taken up by the Polis."

"Taken by the Police—for what?"

"About the Murder, to be sure."

A thrill of horror pervaded the Court as these words were spoken, and Meekins, whose impassive face had never changed before, became now pale as death.

"Tell the Jury what you saw, on the morning you speak of."

"I was at home, workin', when the Polis passed by. They asked m where Black Sam lived; 'Up the road,' says I."

"How far is your house from his?"

"About fifty perches, your Honer, in the same Boreen, but high up."

"So that, in going from Mr. Godfrey's to his own home, Sam mu have passed your door?"

"Yes, Sir."

"This he did every day—two or three times—didn't he?"

"He did, Sir."

"Did you usually speak to each other as he went by?"

"Yes, Sir; we always would say, 'God save you,' or the like."

"How was he dressed on these occasions?"

"The way he was always dressed, how would he be?"

"That's exactly what I'm asking you."

"Faix! he had his coat and breeches, like any other man."

"I see. He had his coat and breeches, like any other man—now what colour was his coat?"

"It was grey, Sir—blue-grey. I know it well."

"How do you come to know it well?"

"Bekase my own boy, Ned, Sir, bought one off the same piece befo he 'listed, and I couldn't forget it."

"Where were you the day after the murder, when the Policeme came to take Sam Eustace?"

"I was sitting at my own door smoking a pipe, and I see the Pol comin', and so I went in and shut the door."

"What was that for? You had no reason to fear them."

"Ayeh!—who knows—the Polis is terrible!"

"Well, after that——"

"Well, when I heard them pass, I opened the door, and then, I sa enough. They were standing at Sam's house; one of them talking Sam, and the other two rummaging about, sticking poles into the thatc and tumbling over the turf in the stack.

"'Is'nt this a pretty business,' says Sam, calling out to me. 'Tl Polis is come to take me off to prison, because some one murdered tl master.' 'Well, his soul's in glory anyhow,' says I, and I shut the door.

"And saw nothing more?"

"Only the Polis lading Sam down the Boreen betune them."

"He made no resistance, then?"

"Not a bit: he went as quiet as a child. When he was going by th [illegible], I remember he said to one of the Polis, 'Would it be plazing t [illegible] help me wid my coat, for I cut my finger yesterday?'"

"Didn't I say it was with a reaping-hook?" cried Meekins, who, in all the earnestness of anxiety, followed every word that fell from the witness.

His Counsel sprung to his feet, and pulled him back by the arm, but not before the unguarded syllables had been heard by every one around. Such was the sensation now produced, that for several minutes the proceedings were interrupted; while the Counsel conferred in low whispers together, and all seemed thunderstruck and amazed. Twice Meekins stood forward to address the Court, but on each occasion he was restrained by the Counsel beside him, and it was only by the use of menaces that Wallace succeeded in enforcing silence on him. "When the moment of cross-examination arrives," said he to the Jury, "I hope to explain every portion of this seeming difficulty. Have you any further questions to ask the witness?"

"A great many more," said Hipsley. "Now, Morris, attend to me. Sam asked the Police to assist him, as he had cut his hand with a reaping-hook?"

"He did indeed, sir," said the witness; "and a dreadful cut it was. It was hard for him to get his hand into the sleeve of the jacket."

"I perceive he had difficulty in putting on the jacket, but the policemen helped him?"

"They did, Sir, and one of them was hurting him, and Sam called out, 'Take care—take care. It's better to cut the ould sleeve; it's not worth much, now.'"

"And did they cut it?"

"They did, Sir; they ripped it up all the way to the elbow."

"That was a pity, wasn't it, to rip up a fine freize coat like that?"

"Oh, it wasn't his coat at all, Sir. It was only a flannel jacket he had for working in."

"So, then, he did not wear the blue-grey freize like your son's when he went to Gaol?"

"No, Sir. He wore a jacket.

"Now, why was that?"

"Sorrow one o' me knows; but I remember he didn't wear it."

"Didn't I say that I left my coat at the bog, and that I was ashamed to go in the ould jacket?" screamed out Meekins, whose earnestness was above all control.

"If this go on, it is impossible that I can continue to conduct this case, my Lord," said Wallace. "While no attempt has been made to refute one tittle of the great facts I have mentioned, a system of trick has been resorted to, by which my client's credit is sought to be impugned. What care I, if he was known by a hundred nicknames.

He has told the Court already that he has lived a life of reckless adve ture—that he has sailed under every flag, and in every kind of ente prise. Mayhap, amid his varied characters, he has played that of Land Bailiff; nor is it very strange that he should not wish to para before the world the fact of his being arrested, even under a false acc sation, for he was discharged, as he has just told you, two days after."

A large bundle, carefully sealed, was now carried into the Court, an deposited before Mr. Hipsley, who, after a few seconds' consultation wit Grounsell, rose, and addressed the Court.

"My learned friend complains of being surprised; he will, perhap have a better right to be so in a few moments hence. I now deman that this man be consigned to the dock. These affidavits are all regula my Lord, and the evidence I purpose to lay before you will very s confirm them."

The Judge briefly scanned the papers before him, and, by a gestur the command was issued, and Meekins, who never uttered a word, wa conducted within the dock.

"I will merely ask the witness two or three questions more," adde Hipsley, turning towards the Jailor, who alone, of all the assembly, looked on without any wonderment.

"Now, witness, when did you see the Prisoner wear the blue-grey coat? After the death of Mr. Godfrey, I mean."

"I never seen him wear it again," was the answer.

"How could ye?" cried Meekins, in a hoarse [illegible] ye? I sailed for America the day after I was set at [illegible]

"Be silent, Sir," said the Prisoner's Counsel, who [illegible] these interruptions, now assumed [illegible] with the craft of his calling, [illegible] was about to be sprung beneath him.

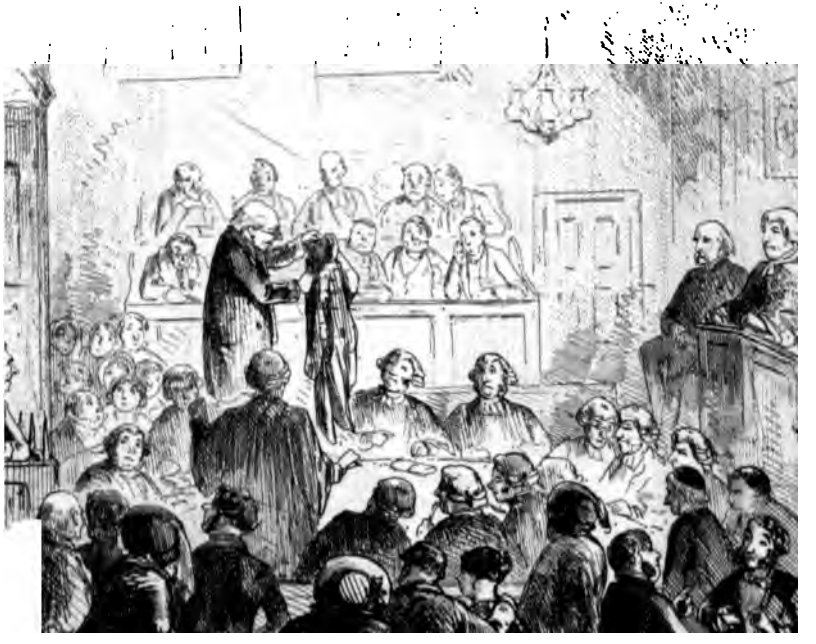
"[illegible]," said Hipsley, and, as he spoke [illegible] that made them fall [illegible] the coat worn [illegible] day of Mr. Godfrey's murder, [illegible] Is that true?"

"[illegible] Sir."

"[illegible] said that this coat—part of a piece [illegible] coat—was of a peculiar colour?"

"It was, Sir; and more nor that, they had both the [illegible] Sam's [illegible], and my son's was metal."

[illegible] these circumstances you [illegible] coat if you were [illegible], instead of answering [illegible]



eyes fixed upon the dock, where the Prisoner, with both hands grasping the iron spikes, stood, his glaring eyeballs rivetted upon the old man's face, with an expression of earnestness and terror actually horrible to witness.

"Look at me, Morris," said Hipsley, "and answer my question. Would you know this coat again?"

"That is, would you swear to it?" interposed the opposite Counsel.

"I believe I would, Sir," was the answer.

"You must be sure, my good man. Belief is too vague for us here," said the Prisoner's Lawyer.

"Is this it?" said the Solicitor, as, breaking the seals of the parcel before him, he held up a coat, which, ragged and eaten by worms, seemed of a far darker colour than that described by the witness.

The old man took it in his hands and examined it over carefully, inspecting with all the minute curiosity of age every portion of the garment. The suspense at this moment was terrible—not a syllable was spoken—not a breath stirred—nothing but the long-drawn respirations of the Prisoner, who, still leaning on the iron railing of the dock, watched the old man's motions with the most harrowing intensity.

"Let me see it on him," said the witness at last.

"Prisoner, put on that coat," said the Judge.

Meekins tried to smile as he proceeded to obey, but the effort was too much, and the features became fixed into one rigid expression, resembling the look of hysteric laughter.

"Well, do you know me now?" cried he, in a voice whose every accent rang with a tone of intimidation and defiance.

"I do," said the witness, boldly. "I'll swear to that coat, my Lord, and I'll prove I'm right. It was the same stuffing put into both collars; and if I'm telling truth, it's a piece of ould corderoy is in that one there."

The very grave was not more still than the Court as the officer of the Gaol, taking off the coat, ripped up the collar, and held up in his hand a small piece of tarnished corduroy.

"My Lord! my Lord! will you let a poor man's life be swore away——"

"Silence, Sir,—be still, I say," cried the Prisoner's Counsel, who saw the irremediable injury of these passionate appeals. "I am here to conduct your defence, and I will not be interfered with. Your Lordship will admit that this proceeding has all the character of a surprise. We were perfectly unprepared for the line my learned friend has taken——"

"Permit me to interrupt the Counsel, my Lord. I need scarcely appeal to this Court to vindicate me against any imputation such as the

learned Gentleman opposite would apply to me. Your Lordship's venerable predecessors on that Bench have more than once borne witness to the fairness and even the lenity of the manner in which the Crown prosecutions have been conducted. Any attempt to surprise, any effort to entrap a Prisoner, would be as unworthy of us as it would be impossible in a Court over which you preside. The testimony which the witness has just given, the extraordinary light his evidence has just shown, was only made available to ourselves by one of those circumstances in which we see a manifestation of the terrible judgment of God upon him who sheds the blood of his fellow-man. Yes, my Lord, if any case can merit the high designation of Providential intervention, it is this one. Every step of this singular history is marked by this awful characteristic. It is the nephew of the murdered man by whom the first trace of crime has been detected. It is by him that we have been enabled to bring the Prisoner into that dock. It is by him that a revelation has been made which, had it not occurred in our own day, and under our own eyes, we should be disposed to class amongst the creations of fiction. The learned Counsel has told you that those articles of clothing have been produced here by surprise. This affidavit is the shortest answer to that suspicion. From this you will see that, early this morning, young Mr. Dalton requested that two Magistrates of the city should be brought to his bedside, to take down the details of an important declaration. The fever which for several days back had oppressed him, had abated for the time, and he was, although weak and low, calm and collected in all his faculties. It was then, with remarkable accuracy, and in a manner totally free from agitation, that he made the following singular revelation." The Counsel then recited, at more length than would suit our readers' patience to follow, the story of Frank's visit to Ireland when a boy, and his accidental presence in the grounds of Corrig O'Neal on the very night of the murder. "At first the Magistrates were disposed to regard this revelation as the mere dream of an erring intellect; but when he described every feature of the locality, and the most intricate details of scenery, their opinion was changed; and when at last he designated the exact spot where he had seen a large bundle buried, it only needed that this should be confirmed to establish the strict truth of all he alleged. With every care and precaution against deception, the Magistrates proceeded to visit the place. They were accompanied by several persons of character and station, in presence of whom the examination was made. So accurate was the narrative, that they found the spot without diffi- [illegible] digging down about two feet, they came upon the articles [illegible] see before you. These, without any examination, they

at once sealed up, in presence of the witnesses, and here for the first time have they been displayed to view."

As the Counsel had reached thus far, the fall of a heavy body resounded through the Court, and the cry was raised that the Prisoner had been seized with a fit.

"No, my Lord," exclaimed the Lawyer; "fatigue and weariness alone have produced this effect. My unhappy client is no more proof against exhaustion than against slander."

"My Lord! my Lord!" cried the Prisoner, as, holding by the spikes of the dock, he leaned forwards over it, "can't I get justice? Is it my coat——"

"Sit down, Sir," said his Counsel, angrily; "leave this to *me*."

"What do you care what becomes of me?" cried the other, rudely. "Where's Father Cahill? Where's——" at this instant his eyes met those of D'Esmonde, as, seated in the gallery immediately above him, he watched the proceedings with an agonising interest, only second to the Prisoner's own. "Oh, look what you've brought me to!" cried he, in an accent of heartbroken misery; "oh, see where I'm standing now!"

The utterance of these words sent a thrill through the Court, and the Judge was obliged to remind the Prisoner that he was but endangering his own safety by these rash interruptions.

"Sure I know it, my Lord; sure I feel it," cried he, sobbing; "but what help have I? Is there one to stand by me? You're lookin' for marks of blood, ain't ye?" screamed he to the Jury, who were now examining the coat and cap with great attention—"and there it is now—there it is!" cried he, wildly, as his eyes detected a folded paper that one of the jurymen had just taken from the coat-pocket. "What could I get by it?—sure the Will couldn't do me any harm."

"This *is* a Will, my Lord," said the Foreman, handing the document down to the Bench. It is dated, too, on the very night before Mr. Godfrey's death."

The Judge quickly scanned the contents, and then passed it over to Mr. Hipsley, who, glancing his eyes over it, exclaimed,

"If we wanted any further evidence to exculpate the memory of Mr. Dalton, it is here. By this Will, signed, sealed, and witnessed in all form, Mr. Godfrey bequeathed to his brother-in-law, his whole estate of Corrig O'Neal, and, with the exception of some trifling legacies, names him heir to all he is possessed of."

"Let me out of this—leave me free!" shouted the Prisoner, whose eyeballs now glared with the red glow of madness. "What brought me into your schemes and plots?—why did I ever come here? Oh, my Lord, don't see a poor man come to harm that has no friends.

Bad luck to them here and hereafter, the same Daltons! It was Ould Peter turned me out upon the world, and Godfrey was no better. Oh, my Lord! oh, Gentlemen! if ye knew what druv me to it—but I didn't do it—I never said I did. I'll die innocent!"

These words were uttered with a wild volubility, and, when over, the Prisoner crouched down in the dock, and buried his face in his hands. From that instant he never spoke a word. The trial was prolonged till late into the night; a Commission was sworn, and sent to the Inn, to examine young Dalton, and interrogate him on every point. All that skill and address could do, were exerted by the Counsel for the defence; but, as the case proceeded, the various facts only tended to strengthen and corroborate each other, and long before the Jury retired, their verdict was certain.

"Guilty, my Lord." And, well-known and anticipated as the words were, they were heard in all that solemn awe their terrible import conveys.

The words seemed to rouse the Prisoner from his state, for, as if with a convulsive effort, he sprang to his legs and advanced to the front of the dock. To the dreadful question of the Judge, as to what he had to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon him? he made no answer, and his wild gaze and astonished features showed an almost unconsciousness of all around him. From this state of stupor he soon rallied, and, grasping the iron spikes with his hands, he protruded his head and shoulders over the dock, while he carried his eyes over the assembled crowd, 'till at last they lighted on the spot where Cahill and D'Esmonde were seated. The former, pale and anxious-looking—the latter, with his head buried in his hands. The Prisoner nodded with an insolent air of familiarity to the Priest, and muttered a few broken words in Irish. Again was the terrible demand made by the Judge; and now the Prisoner turned his face towards the Bench, and stood as if reflecting on his reply.

"Go on," cried he at last, in a tone of rude defiance; and the Judge, in all the passionless dignity of his high station, calmly reviewed the evidence in the case, and gave his full concurrence to the verdict of the Jury.

"I cannot conclude," said he, solemnly, "without adverting to that extraordinary combination of events by which this crime, after a long lapse of years, has been brought home to its guilty author. The evidence you have heard to-day from Mr. Dalton—the singular corroboration of each particular stated by him in the very existence of the Will, which so strongly refutes the motive alleged against the late Mr. Dalton—were all necessary links of the great chain of proof; and yet all these might have existed in vain, were it not for another agency—too eventful

to be called an accident—I allude to the circumstance by which this man became acquainted with one who was himself peculiarly interested in unfathoming the mystery of this murder: I mean the Abbé D'Esmonde. The name of this gentleman has been more than once alluded to in this trial, but he has not been brought before you, nor was there any need that he should. Now the Abbé, so far from connecting the Prisoner with the crime, believed him to be the agency by which it might have been fastened on others; and to this end he devoted himself with every zeal to the inquiry. Here, then, amidst all the remarkable coincidences of this case, we find the very strangest of all, for this same Abbé—the accidental means of rescuing the Prisoner from death at Venice, and who is the chief agent in now bringing him to punishment, here—this Abbé is himself the natural son of the late Mr. Godfrey. Sent when a mere boy to St. Omer and Louvain to be educated for the Roman Catholic Priesthood, he was afterwards transferred to Salamanca, where he graduated, and took deacon's orders. Without any other clue to his parentage than the vague lines of admission in the Conventual registry, the cheques for money signed and forwarded by Mr. Godfrey, this gentleman had risen by his great talents to a high and conspicuous station before he addressed himself to the search after his family. I have no right to pursue this theme further; nor had I alluded to it at all, save as illustrating in so remarkable a manner that direct and unmistakable impress of the working of Providence in this case, showing how, amidst all the strange chaos of a time of revolution and anarchy—when governments were crumbling, and nations rending asunder—this one blood-spot—the foul deed of murder—should cry aloud for retribution, and by a succession of the least likely incidents, bring the guilty man to justice."

After a careful review of all the testimony against the Prisoner—the conclusiveness of which left no room for a doubt—he told him to abandon all hope of a pardon in this world—concluding, in the terrible words of the law, by the sentence of death.

"You, Samuel Esmonde, will be taken from the bar of this Court to the place from whence you came, the Gaol, and thence to the place of execution—there to be hung by the neck till you are dead——"

"Can I see my Priest—may the Priest come to me," cried the Prisoner, fiercely, for not even the appalling solemnity of the moment could repress the savage energy of his nature.

"Miserable man," said the Judge, in a faltering accent, "I beseech you to employ well the few minutes that remain to you in this world, and carry not into the next that spirit of defiance by which you would brave an earthly judgment-seat; and may God have mercy on your soul."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"THE RETRIBUTION."

The sudden flash of intelligence by which young Frank was enabled to connect the almost forgotten incidents of boyhood with the date, and the other circumstances of the murder, had very nearly proved fatal to himself. His brain was little able to resist the influence of all these conflicting emotions, and for some days his faculties wandered away in the wildest and most incoherent fancies. It was only on the very morning of the trial that he became self-possessed and collected. Then it was that he could calmly remember every detail of that fatal night, and see their bearing on the mysterious subject of the trial. At first Grounsell listened to his story as a mere raving; but when Frank described with minute accuracy the appearance of the spot—the old orchard, the stone stair that descended into the garden, and the little door which opened into the wood—he became eagerly excited; and, anxious to proceed with every guarantee of caution, he summoned two other Magistrates to the bedside to hear the narrative. We have already seen the event which followed that revelation, and by which the guilt of the murderer was established.

From honr to hour, as the trial proceeded, Frank received tidings from the Court-house. The excitement, far from injuring, seemed to rally and reinvigorate him; and although the painful exposure of their domestic circumstances was cautiously slurred over to his ears, it was plain to see the indignant passion with which he heard of Nelly and Kate being dragged before the public eye. It was, indeed, a day of deep and terrible emotion, and, when evening came, he sank into the heavy sleep of actual exhaustion. While nothing was heard in the sick room save the long-drawn breathings of the sleeper, the drawing-rooms of the hotel were crowded with the gentry of the neighbourhood, all eager to see and welcome the Daltons home again. If the old were pleased to meet with the veteran Count Stephen, the younger were no less delighted with even such casual glimpses as they caught of Kate, in the few moments she could spare from her brother's bedside. As for Lady Hester, such a torrent of sensations, such a perfect avalanche of emotion, was perfect ecstasy; perhaps not the least agreeable feeling being the assurance that she no longer possessed any right or title to Corrig O'Neal, and was literally unprovided for in the world.

"One detests things by halves," said she; "but to be utterly ruined is quite charming."

The country visitors were not a little surprised at the unfeigned sincerity of her enjoyment, and still more, perhaps, at the warm cordiality of her manner towards them—she who, 'till now, had declined all proffers of acquaintanceship, and seemed determined to shun them.

Consigning to her care all the duties of receiving the crowd of visitors, which old Count Stephen was but too happy to see, Kate only ventured for a few minutes at a time to enter the drawing-room. It was while hastening back from one of these brief intervals that she heard her name spoken, in a low but distinct voice. She turned round, and saw a man, closely enveloped in a large cloak, beside her.

"It is I, Miss Dalton—the Abbé D'Esmonde," said he. "May I speak with your brother?"

Kate could scarcely answer him from terror. All the scenes in which she had seen him figure rose before her view, and the man was, to her eyes, the very embodiment of peril.

"My brother is too ill, Sir, to receive you," said she. "In a few days hence——"

"It will then be too late, Miss Dalton," said he, mournfully. "The very seconds as they pass, now, are as days to one who stands on the brink of eternity."

"Is there anything which I could communicate to him myself? for I am fearful of what might agitate or excite him——"

"If it must be so," said he, sighing, and as if speaking to himself. "But could you trust me to say a few words? I will be most cautious."

"If, then, to-morrow——"

"To-morrow! It must be now—at this very instant!" cried he, eagerly. "The life of one, who is unfit to go hence, depends upon it." Then, taking her hand, he continued: "I have drawn up a few lines, in shape of a petition for mercy to this wretched man. They must be in London by to-morrow night, to permit of a reprieve before Saturday. Your brother's signature is all-essential. For this I wished to see him, and to know if he has any acquaintanceship with persons in power which could aid the project. You see how short the time is—all depends upon minutes. The Secretary of State can suspend the execution, and in the delay a commutation of the sentence may be obtained."

"Oh, give it to me!" cried she, eagerly. And, snatching the paper from his hands, she hurried into the chamber.

Frank Dalton was awake, but in all the languor of great debility. He scarcely listened to his sister, 'till he heard her pronounce the name of the Abbé D'Esmonde.

"Is he here, Kate?—is he here?" cried he, eagerly.

"Yes, and most anxious to see and speak with you."

"Then let him come in, Kate. Nay, nay, it will not agitate me."

Kate noiselessly retired, and, beckoning the Abbé to come forward, she left the room, and closed the door.

D'Esmonde approached the sick bed with a cautious, almost timid air, and seated himself on a chair, without speaking.

"So, then, we are cousins, I find," said Frank, stretching out his wasted hand towards him. "They tell me you are a Godfrey, Abbé?"

D'Esmonde pressed his hand in token of assent, but did not utter a word.

"I have no wish—I do not know if I have the right—to stand between you and your father's inheritance. If I am destined to arise from this sick bed, the world is open to me, and I am not afraid to encounter it. Let us be friends, then, D'Esmonde, in all candour and frankness."

"Willingly—most willingly. There need be but one rivalry between us," said D'Esmonde, with a voice of deep feeling—"in the struggle who shall best serve the other. Had we known of this before—had I suspected how our efforts might have been combined and united—had I but imagined you as my ally, and not my—— But these are too exciting themes to talk upon. You are not equal to them."

"Not so; it is in such moments that I feel a touch of health and vigour once again. Go on, I beseech you."

"I will speak of that which more immediately concerns us," said the Abbé. "This wretched man stands for execution on Saturday. Let us try to save him. His guilt must have already had its expiation in years of remorse and suffering. Here is a petition I have drawn up to the Secretary of State. It has been signed by several of the Jury who tried the cause. We want your name, also, to it. Such a commutation as may sentence him to exile is all that we pray for."

"Give me the pen; I'll sign it at once."

"There—in that space," said the Abbé, pointing with his finger. "How your hand trembles. This cannot be like your usual writing."

"Let me confirm it by my seal, then. You'll find it on the table yonder."

D'Esmonde melted the wax, and stood beside him, while the youth pressed down the seal.

"Even that," said the Abbé, "might be disputed. There's some one passing in the corridor; let him hear you acknowledge it as your act and hand." And, so saying, he hastened to the door, and made a sign to the waiter to come in. "Mr. Dalton desires you to witness his signature," said he to the man.

"I acknowledge this as mine," said Frank, already half exhausted by the unaccustomed exertion.

"Your name, there, as witnessing it," whispered D'Esmonde; and the waiter added his signature.

"Have you hope of success, Abbé?" said Frank, faintly.

"Hope never fails me," replied D'Esmonde, in a voice of bold and assured tone. "It is the only capital that humble men like myself possess; but we can draw upon it without limit. The fate of riches is often ruin, but there is no Bankruptcy in Hope. Time presses now," said he, as if suddenly remembering himself; "I must see to this at once. When may I come again?"

"Whenever you like. I have much to say to you. I cannot tell you, now, how strangely you are mixed up in my fancy—it is but fancy, after all—with several scenes of terrible interest."

"What—how do you mean?" said D'Esmonde, turning hastily about.

"I scarcely know where to begin, or how to separate truth from its counterfeit. Your image is before me, at times and in places where you could not have been. Aye, even in the very crash and tumult of battle, as I remember once at Varenna, beside the Lake of Como. I could have sworn to have seen you cheering on the peasants to the attack."

"What strange tricks Imagination will play upon us!" broke in D'Esmonde; but his voice faltered, and his pale cheek grew paler as he said the words.

"Then, again, in the Babli Palace at Milan, where I was brought as a prisoner, I saw you leave the council-chamber arm-in-arm with an Austrian Archduke. When I say I saw you, I mean as I now see you here—more palpable to my eyes, than when you sat beside my sick bed at Verona."

"Dreams—dreams," said D'Esmonde. "Such illusions bespeak a mind broken by sickness. Forget them, Dalton, if you would train your thoughts to higher uses." And, so saying, in a tone of pride, the Abbé bowed, and passed out.

As D'Esmonde passed out into the street, Cahill joined him.

"Well," cried the latter, "is it done?"

"Yes, Michel," was the answer; "signed, and sealed, and witnessed in all form. By this document I am recognised as a member of his family, inheriting that which I shall never claim. No," cried he, with exaltation of voice and manner, "I want none of their possessions; I ask but to be accounted of their race and name; and yet the time may come when these conditions shall be reversed, and they who would scarcely own me, to-day, may plot and scheme to trace our relationship.

Now for Rome. To-night—this very night—I set out. With this evidence of my station and fortune there can be no longer any obstacle. The struggle is past—now to enjoy the victory."

"You will see him before you go, D'Esmonde? A few minutes is all he asks."

"Why should I? What bond is there between us, now? The tie is loosened for ever; besides, he deceived us, Michel—deceived us in everything."

"Be it so," said the other; "but remember, that it is the last prayer of one under sentence of death—the last wish of one who will soon have passed away hence."

"Why should I go to hear the agonising entreaties for a mercy that cannot be granted—the harrowing remorse of a guilty nature?"

"Do not refuse him, D'Esmonde. He clings to this object with a fixed purpose, that turns his mind from every thought that should become the hour. In vain I speak to him of the short interval between him and the grave. He neither hears nor heeds me. His only question is, 'Is he coming—will he come to me?'"

"To lose minutes, when every one of them is priceless—to waste emotions, when my heart is already racked and tortured—why should I do this?" cried D'Esmonde, peevishly.

"Do not refuse *me*, D'Esmonde," said Cahill, passionately. "I despair of recalling the miserable man to the thought of his eternal peril 'till this wish be satisfied."

"Be it so, then," said the Abbé, proudly; and he walked along beside his friend in silence.

They traversed the streets without a word spoken. Already D'Esmonde had assumed an air of reserve, which seemed to mark the distance between himself and his companion; the thoughtful gravity of his look savoured no less of pride than reflection. In suchwise did Cahill read his manner, and by a cautious deference, appear to accept the new conditions of their intimacy.

"The Prisoner has not uttered a word since you were here, Sir," said the Gaoler, as they entered the gate. He shows the greatest anxiety whenever the door opens; but, as if disappointed on not seeing whom he expected, relapses at once into his silent reserve."

"You see that he still expects you," whispered Cahill to the Abbé; and the other assented with a faint nod of the head.

"No, Sir; this way," said the Gaoler; "he is now in the condemned cell." And, so saying, he led the way along the corridor.

By the faint light of a small lamp, fixed high up in the wall, they could just detect the figure of a man, as he sat crouched on the low

settle-bed, his head resting on his arms as they were crossed over his knees. He never moved as the grating sound of the heavy door jarred on the stillness, but sat still and motionless.

"The Abbé D'Esmonde has come to see you, Eustace," said the Gaoler, tapping him on the shoulder. "Wake up, man, and speak to him."

The Prisoner lifted his head and made an effort to say something, but though his lips moved, there came no sounds from them. At last, with an effort that was almost convulsive, he pointed to the door, and said, "Alone—alone!"

"He wants to speak with you alone, Sir," whispered the Gaoler, "and so we will retire."

D'Esmonde could not see them leave the cell without a sense of fear—less the dread of any personal injury than the strange terror so inseparable to any close communion with one convicted of a dreadful crime—and he actually shuddered as the massive door was banged to!

"You are cold, Sir!" said the Prisoner, in a hollow, sepulchral voice.

"No, it was not cold!" replied D'Esmonde.

"I can guess what it was, then!" said the other, with an energy to which passion seemed to contribute. "But I'll not keep you long here. Sit down, Sir. You must sit beside me, for there is no other seat than the settle-bed. But there is nobody here to see the great Abbé D'Esmonde side by side with a murderer."

"Wretched man," said D'Esmonde, passionately, "by what fatality did you rush upon your fate? Why did you ever return to this country?"

"It is to tell you that—aye, that very thing—I asked you to come here to-night," said the Prisoner, with a firm, full voice. "I came here for *you*—just so—for *you yourself*. There, there," continued he, haughtily, "don't look as if I wanted to trick you. Is it here, is it now, that a lie would sarve me? Listen to me, and don't stop me, for I want to turn my thoughts to something else, when this is off my heart. Listen to me. Very soon after you saved me at Venice, I knew all about you; who you were, and what you were planning—aye, deep as you thought yourself, I read every scheme in you, and opened every letter you wrote or received. You don't believe me. Shall I give you a proof? Did you accept eight bills for money Morlache the Jew sent you, from Florence, in March last? Did Cardinal Antinori write to say that the Bull that named you Cardinal must have your birth set forth as noble? Did the Austrian Field-Marshal send you the cross of St. Joseph, and did you not return it, as, to wear it, would unmask you to the Italians?"

"What if all this were true?" said D'Esmonde, proudly. "Is it to one like you I am to render account for my actions? What is it to you if——"

"What is it to *me?*" cried the other, fiercely—"what is it to me? Isn't it everything! Isn't it what brought me here, and what in three days more will bring me to the gallows! I tell you again, I saw what you were bent on, and I knew you'd succeed—aye, that I did. If it was good blood you wanted to be a Cardinal, I was the only one could help you."

"You knew the secret of my birth, then?" cried D'Esmonde, in deep earnestness. "You could prove my descent from the Godfreys?"

"No! but I could destroy the only evidence against it," said the other, in a deep, guttural voice. "I could tear out of the Parish registry the only leaf that could betray you; and it was for that I came back here; and it was for that I'm now here. And I did do it. I broke into the vestry of the Chapel at midnight, and I tore out the page, and I have it here, in my hand, this minute. There was a copy of this same paper at the College at Louvain, but I stole that, too; for I went as Porter there, just to get an opportunity to take it—that one I destroyed."

"But whence this interest in my fortunes?" said D'Esmonde, half proudly, for he was still slow to believe all that he heard.

"The paper will tell you that," said the other, slowly unfolding it, and flattening it out on his knee. "This is the certificate of your baptism! Wait—stop a minute," cried he, catching D'Esmonde's arm, as, in his impatience, he tried to seize the paper. "This piece of paper is the proof of who you are, and, moreover, the only proof that will soon exist to show it."

"Give it to me—let me see it!" cried D'Esmonde, eagerly. "Why have you withheld 'till this time what might have spared me anxious days and weary nights; and by what right have you mixed yourself up with my fortunes?"

"By what right is it—by what right?" cried the other, in a voice which passion rendered harsh and discordant. "Is that what you want to know?" And, as he spoke, he bent down and fixed his eyes on the Abbé with a stern stare. "You want to know what right I have," said he, and his face became almost convulsed with passion. "There's my right—read that!" cried he, holding out the paper before D'Esmonde's eyes. "There's your birth proved and certified: 'Mathew, son of Samuel and Mary Eustace of Ballykinnon, baptized by me this 10th day of April, 18—. Joseph Barry, P.P.' There's the copy of your admission into the Convent, and here's the Superior's receipt for the

first quarter's payment as a probationer. Do you know who you are now? or do you still ask me what right I have to meddle in your affairs?"

"And you—and you—you——" cried D'Esmonde, gasping.

"I am your Father. Aye, you can hear the words here, and needn't start at the sound of them. We're in the condemned cell of a Gaol, and nobody near us. You are my son. Mr. Godfrey paid for you as a student 'till—'till—— But it's all over now. I never meant you to know the truth; but a lie wouldn't serve you any longer. Oh, Mathew, Mathew!" cried he; and of a sudden his voice changed, and softened to accents of almost choking sorrow—"haven't you one word for me?—one word of affection for him that you brought to this, and who forgives you for it?—one word, even, to call me your own Father?" He fell at the other's feet, and clasped his arms around his knees as he spoke, but the appeal was unheard.

Pale as a corpse, with his head slightly thrown forward, and his eyes wildly staring before him, D'Esmonde sat perfectly motionless. At last the muscles of his mouth fashioned themselves into a ghastly smile, a look of mockery so dreadful to gaze upon, that the Prisoner, terror-stricken at the sight, rushed to the door, and beat loudly against it, as he screamed for help. It was opened on the instant, and the Gaoler, followed by two others, entered.

"He's ill; his Reverence is taken bad," said the old man, while he trembled from head to foot with agitation.

"What's this paper? What is he clutching in his hands?" cried the Gaoler.

D'Esmonde started at the words. For the first time a gleam of intelligence shot over his features, and as suddenly he bent a look of withering hate on the speaker; and then, with a passionate vehemence that told of a frantic brain, he tore the paper into fragments, and, with a wild yell, as if of triumph, he fell senseless on the ground. When they lifted him up, his features were calm, but passionless, his eye was vacant, and his lips slightly parted. An expression of weariness and exhaustion, rather than of actual pain, pervaded the face. He never spoke again. The lamp of intellect was extinguished for ever, and not even a flicker nor a spark remained to cheer the darkness within him. Hopeless and helpless idiotcy was ever after the lot of one whose mind, once stored with the most lofty ambitions, never scrupled, at any cost, to attain its object. And he whose proud aspirings soared to the very grandest of earthly prizes, who gave his counsel among Princes, now lives on, bereft of mind and intelligence, without consciousness of the past, or a hope for the future.

[illegible] chapter, we would fain [illegible] few words will now suffice to [illegible] whom we have so long sojourned [illegible] murder of Mr. Godfrey, restored Frank [illegible] of his family; and although the trying [illegible] had passed, made deep and dangerous inroads [illegible] hope, and the watchful care of Kate, restored [illegible] lapse of some weeks, he was enabled to be about [illegible] to the recollection of many the handsome figure and [illegible] of his father.

[illegible] a year before, Corrig O'Neal had not seen such a party be[illegible] nor had those gloomy old walls echoed to such sounds as [illegible] heard within them. In addition to Lady Hester, George [illegible] now a Colonel, was the guest of the Daltons. Scarcely arrived [illegible] he quitted London at the moment when the tidings of his [illegible] achievements had made him the hero of the day, and hurried to [illegible] who, through every change of his fortunes, had been the dearest [illegible] of his heart.

What tender reproaches—what heart-warm confessions—did those old woods [illegible] as side by side the lovers walked along, revealing the secret [illegible] of the past and recalling each incident which once had cherished hope [illegible] But it is not in such company we would play the [illegible] watch for the changeful blushes of that soft [illegible] where tears of joy and grief are mingled. Neither would we care to [illegible] as with deeds and bonds, codicils and conveyances, [illegible] pour Frank from place to place, urgently impressing [illegible] the necessity for those "business habits," the sad neglect of which had been the ruin of all the Daltons. As little inducement is there to follow Lady Hester, whose restless activity was interfering with every one and everything, taking the most lively interest in the property the very moment it ceased to be her own, and devoted to all the [illegible] which no longer could lay claim to being duties.

Pleasanter, perhaps, would it be to follow the old Count, as he sauntered alone for hours, trying to trace out in the long-forgotten scenes the stories of his boyhood. What pleasant reveries they were!—what glorious compensations for all the tumultuous passages of an eventful

he felt them! And so he recognised with grateful heart
which had befallen him, to close his days where he
the midst of his own—loving and beloved.

nes and emotions we must not dally. Story-
y's chickens, have no sympathies with sunny
province is amidst the hurricane and the storm.
very essence of tranquil enjoyment, that it must
ation of each to conceive.

weighed on all, and that was the absence of poor Nelly
not amongst them, to see their happiness, and heighten
ment by all the benevolence of her kindly nature? It was true
were relieved of all anxiety regarding her by a letter, which had
llowed them from Vienna, and which told how she had arrived in that city, a few days after they had left it.

"I stood," she said, "looking at the great Palace, where they told me Count Stephen lived, and could not bring myself to think it was not a dream—that such as *I*, should have business there!

"I sat down on the steps of a church in front of it, and gazed for hours long at the great door, through which you must have passed so often, and the windows which doubtless you stood at—perhaps thinking of poor Nelly! At last came Hanserl to say that he had obtained leave to see the Palace, and oh, how my heart beat at the words—for there was Pride as well as Humiliation in the thought—and so we went in, and, crossing the great court, ascended the wide staircase. How beautiful it all was, those marble statues—the rich frescoes of the ceilings—the gorgeous lamps, all emblazoned with armorial emblems; and yet I thought less of these, than the polished steps which your feet had trodden, and which I could have kissed for your sake.

"I had not imagined so much magnificence. You will smile, perhaps, at my simplicity, but so did not that kind old soldier with the wooden leg, who took such pains to show us everything. He was evidently pleased to witness our admiring wonder, and actually laughed at Hanserl's enthusiasm for all those bright scimitars and shields of Turkish make, the horse-tailed banners, and other emblems of Austrian victory; while I stole away silently into a little chamber all hung with blue damask, over the mantelpiece of which was a portrait of our own dear Frank. How I felt that the room was yours, Kate—how my heart told me each object you had touched—and how they all became to my delighted senses, like precious relics, revealing stores of affection laid up in your bosom, and showing a wealth of love I was not conscious of 'till then. Oh, no, dearest sister, I never knew, 'till then, how things without life themselves can be the links between beating hearts! I

looked everywhere for a portrait of yourself, and it was only by asking the old Corporal that I succeeded in finding it. 'The Gräfin's picture is in the Field-Marshal's own room,' said he, with pride, and led the way towards it. Oh, Kate, how beautiful—nay, it is Nelly, your own stern Nelly, who never flattered you herself, nor could bear others to do so—it is Nelly, the same Nelly, unchanged, save in being less trustful, less impulsive, less forgiving than you knew her, and *she* tells you that at sight of such loveliness she stood wonderstruck and fascinated. Had you been really then before me, such as the picture represented, I had not dared to approach you; there was that of nobility and grandeur that had appalled my poor peasant heart, unused to the glitter of diamonds, and the queenly air of high-born beauty; but, as I gazed on the likeness, long and steadily, this expression faded away, and, as though the lineaments were changing, I thought the eyes grew softer; they seemed to moisten, the lips trembled, the bosom heaved and fell, and it was you—you! as I had pressed you to my heart a thousand times—my own! my own!

"I know not what foolish words I may have uttered, nor to what excess my rapture carried me, but I was weeping bitterly as they led me away—aye, bitterly, Kate; for such ecstasy as I felt, finds its true vent in sorrow! But now I am happy once more—happy that I have seen you and dear Frank—happy, that each of us in life has trodden the path that best became him; and so I came away, with many a lingering look, and many a backward glance at what I was never to see again.

"Here, in my mountain home, once more I can sit, alone, and think of you for days long. You wander through all my thoughts, the characters of endless stories, in every imaginable vicissitude, and with every change of fortune; but throughout all, Kate—good and beautiful—truthful, too, as you ever were. There, my tears have blotted out what I tried to say, nor dare I trust myself with more. My school children are already coming through the vineyard; I hear their song—it was your own long ago—

Da sind die Täge lang genuch,
Da sind die Nächte milde.

"Good-by, good-by, my sister—my dear sister.

"N. D.

"Meran."

"Oh! let us hasten thither at once," cried Kate, in rapture. "Oh! dear uncle, let us away to Meran."

"Not till after Tuesday. Kate," whispered George, passionately; and the words covered her cheeks with blushes as she heard them.

The reader knows now all that we care to tell him. Time was when story-tellers wound up with the kind wish that, "if they were not happy, that you and I may be." Nor am I quite certain that we are wiser in our vocation than when those words were in vogue.

We are not vain enough to suppose that we have inspired an interest for any of those characters who have supported the minor parts of our Drama. Should such good fortune have happily attended us, let us say, once for all, that Messrs. Haggerstone, Jekyl, and Purvis yet survive; that the Ricketts' family are in excellent health, autograph gathering and Duke courting, poetising and painting, and pilfering, with all the ardour of youth, untouched by years, and unrestrained by conscience. Lady Hester, too, is again living abroad, and, after trying three new changes of religion, is in treaty with a Heidelberg Professor for a "spec and span" new Faith, which will transcend everything hitherto known, and make even Mormonism ashamed of itself.

As for Prince Midchikoff, he and my Lady Norwood are the delight of a foreign city, which shall be nameless, and their receptions nightly crowded by all the fashionable celebrities and distinguished visitors of that favoured region.

THE END.

ENVOY.

While owning to the fictitious features of this story, and the unreality of all its incidents and actors, I cannot part with my reader without a word as to those truths, stranger than any fiction, to which occasional reference has been made in these volumes; and here, once for all, I beg to declare, that it is not lightly, nor without abundant proof, I have dared speak of the Lombard insurrection as an organised and pre-arranged plan of Austria, to crush the cause of Italian liberty, and extinguish, at least for a while, the hopes of constitutional freedom in the Peninsula.

I am well aware that the interests of truth are seldom well served, when its claims are mixed up and confounded with the details of fiction. I feel strongly, too, the insuitability of the time and place to discuss questions of such grave and portentous importance; and lastly, I know how difficult it must be to the reader so to guide his credulity, that while according his share of sympathy to the mere fiction, he should lend his trustful confidence to assertions apparently thrown out at random, and unsupported by that weight of argument and evidence which ought to sustain them. Of course it could not be expected that in the narrow

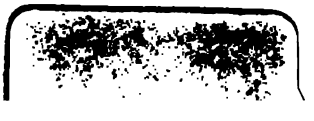
limits of these few remarks I could be able to adduce the proofs on which my opinion is founded. I would only repeat, that I have not come to that opinion rashly nor hastily—neither was it the impression which for a very long time held possession of my mind. Living for the last five years in the scenes alluded to, with reasonable opportunities for forming a judgment, arising out of intimacies with men of all shades of opinion—and stronger still, the absolute knowledge of certain facts distinctly corroborating these views—I own to the most implicit belief in what I have here asserted.

It is scarcely necessary that I should say that the Abbé D'Esmonde is not taken from any living model. I merely intended to embody in the character the views and opinions which I know to be entertained on certain political questions by some men of his cloth at Rome; and that the policy of the Pontifical Court adheres to the fortunes of Despotic Government, is a fact little likely to be denied in the face of the events now happening before our eyes.

Of the few remarks I have thrown out on the question of Irish insurrection, I see nothing to change nor retract. Without any sympathy with those who conceived that project, I can recognise amidst them men of generous impulses, high darings, and transcendent abilities, and yet, with all these qualities, destined to be the dupes of those, who, in the secret bond of their Jesuistry, possess a degree of power that genius never imagined, much less ever compassed.

For all the errors and short-comings of this tale I offer no apology, simply because such excuses are good for nothing. They are, besides, either petty attempts at justification, or small pleas for the merciful judgment of the reader—equally deplorable in the one case, as in the other.

One hope has sustained me in the conduct of this story, nor has it deserted me yet. It is this:—In every page I have written—in every line—I have ever had before me an ardent desire to maintain the good favour of those who have so long befriended me, and to serve that cause of Truth and Morals which can be benefited by the efforts of one even weak and humble as myself.

CHARLES LEVER.

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